

# THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1901.—VOL. LXXIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 7, 1899.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



ZENOBIAN LIFTED THE WEAPON, PULLED THE TRIGGER, AND HER COUSIN FELL BACKWARDS WITH A WILD CRY.

## THE GIPSY BRIDE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

### CHAPTER I.

It was growing dark in the woods of Ottridge; the sun had sunk long since behind the proud crowns of innumerable trees, and the stars had not yet begun to appear. There was scarcely a sound to be heard; the pigeons had ceased their cooing; the chirps of the grasshopper grew fainter, and the "brown bright nightingale" as yet was silent.

Under the shadow of the chestnuts stood a girl, waiting and watching. She made a bold dash of colour in the sombre scene, and could not fail to attract and hold the attention of any casual passer-by. Tall, with a beautiful proportioned figure, the little delicate hands, slender

arched feet, and small aquiline features of the pure gipsy type, even in her strange garb she was lovely to look upon. The rich bloom of health shone through her olive skin; her large dark eyes, soft now as a gazelle's, gleamed dusky under her black brows and long lashes, and the scarlet lips, parted slightly, revealed the prettiest, whitest teeth. The short red skirt she wore was admirably calculated to display her pretty ankles and small feet, and about her head, with its masses of raven hair, she had tied a bright orange handkerchief.

"He will not come to-night," she whispered again and again. "Ah! 'tis foolish to wait here longer;" but she sighed as she spoke, and did not evince any inclination to return to her people. "He is taking his pleasure whilst I stay here, hungering to see him. Oh! but what a fool I am! Why could I not love one of my tribe! Why can't I listen to Beltrame, who loves me!"

She locked her hands together, and stood a moment with her face upturned to the clear

evening sky. Such love, such longing in her starry eyes; such pain about the exquisite mouth, that the man who watched her involuntarily stretched out his hands to her and said softly, "Zenobia!"

She started, and the hot blood rushed tumultuously over throat and brow. "Harley!" she said, a tremour of passion in her tones, "Harley, I thought you would not come."

He had an arm about her now, and was gazing down into her eloquent eyes. "I could not come earlier; as it was, I behaved almost rudely to my host in order to get away. He was never more tedious than to-night."

"I shall be able to stay with you but a little while," the girl said, wistfully. "I shall be missed from the camp, and Beltrame will be hunting for me."

The young man winced a little at her accent, but said cheerfully, "So your cousin is still suspicious, still full of animosity towards me!"

She looked at him with a puzzled air, and answered slowly, "You mean he hates you!"

yes; but your long words are hard to understand."

He was a refined, intellectual young man, and though he loved her, her ignorance was always painful to him. He said, quietly, "When once I have got you all to myself I shall teach you many things. I wonder, Zsnobia, if you can read."

"Ah, yes!" with a pretty air of pride in her accomplishment. "I read other things than palms: I can spell out words, if they are not too long, on scraps of paper that fall in my way. You see, it was just like this; years ago, when I was but a little maid, there was a man—a Georgio—came to our tents; he was ill, and so ill, and we took him in. We never turn away the sick and helpless, and our wise woman nursed him. He was a poor weak creature; he had no will; but when he grew stronger we did not send him adrift; he stayed with us, and he had some old, old newspapers, and having nothing better to do, he taught me my letters out of them."

"And you can write?"

She flushed scarlet, and answered almost angrily, "No, how should I learn? And where would be the use? The Romany tribes have no ways like the Georgios."

When she addressed her lover it was noticeable that she hesitated in her choices of words, and seemed embarrassed. They had known each other but a few weeks, having met first on Newmarket Heath at the Two Thousand; and Harley Valence, being attracted by the gipsy girl's beauty, had laughingly allowed her to tell his fortune. Since then he had followed her from place to place, hardly thinking what the end would be to their strange friendship. But although their acquaintance dated only from April (it was now June) Zsnobia had learned little tricks of speech and manner from her lover, being, like the generality of women, very imitative.

Now, with a proud gesture peculiar to her, she said, "There are many things I don't know—so many you will be ashamed of me; but then I can do much that your fine ladies don't. I can swim, and shoot, and ride our horses bare-backed, and I am so strong."

She stood straight, and tall as a young sapling beside him, her beautiful head flung back, her whole figure instinct with vigorous life.

Harley smiled, then caught her passionately to him.

"My beautiful queen!" he said, scarcely above a whisper, "do you know how dear you are to me?"

The lovely eyes met his wistfully.

"I am sure you love me—but I am afraid you will soon forget me. Beltrame says you are all faithless. Ah! look at me; I am not like the ladies you meet day by day;" she touched her dress with a disdainful gesture, glanced contemptuously at her small, but heavy boots, then with a sigh, "Ah! if we had never met. I wish we never had, I wish we never had!" and hid her face from him.

"But why, Zsnobia?" the young man questioned, blushing dusky. "Have we not been happy?"

"Yes, but all our happiness will fly like a dream; and 'tis hard to pay all my life for just a few weeks' joy. To-morrow will be our last day here; the next we march on for Ascot."

"And you will tell fortunes on the course?" Harley said, vaguely; "and every fool may pay you idle compliments; may jest with you, trifles with you."

Zsnobia drew herself up to her fullest height.

"The Romany laas knows how to defend herself too" (how her abuse of the aspirate vexed him). "She has only one treasure, and she guards it well. All her wealth is in her virtue."

Harley sighed and moved restlessly. She was so beautiful; such a queenly creature; and with all his heart he loved her; but how could he make her his wife—this wild, untutored child of nature! How could he brave the scoffs of his friends, his proud mother's anger, her ward's silent scorn?

He knew full well Mrs. Valence had deter-

mined he should marry Varena Fairholm; he himself had been well content with the arrangement until he saw Zsnobia, but now he loathed the idea of a life spent with the blonde beauty. He could not cast aside this girl who loved and trusted him; come what might he would possess her.

"Darling," he said, in a low, passionate tone, "can you bear to let me slip out of your life? Never to see me again? To know that when you say good-bye to-morrow you say good-bye for all time?"

She shivered, and turned very pale.

"I must bear all this," she said, locking her hands together in a wild way. "I can't help myself."

"And when I am gone, never to return, what will you do?"

"I shall marry my cousin," recklessly. "He loves me and my people wish it. Oh, I shall be happy at last. Oh, yes."

And suddenly she broke into wilder sobs, and clung about him with fond hands, as though she could not let him go.

His pride broke down under her grief; he forgot everything but his love.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart, hush! Do you think I will ever leave you? Do you suppose I can go back to life without you?"

"What can you mean?" she questioned, lifting her head from his breast. "Will you live our life? Will you be as one of us? No, no! You are mocking me. Make the Georgio woman your bride. The wolf does not mate with the lamb, nor the Georgio with a Romany lass!"

"Zsnobia, listen! I am going to take you away; to separate you from your tribe; to show you new and wonderful things, of which you cannot even dream. Sweetheart, I am going to make you my wife!"

She listened in a dazed way, not comprehending yet all that his words implied; only deliciously happy to feel that his love for her was so great he could forget his pride for her sake. Suddenly, with an impulse peculiar to her passionate nature, she knelt down before him, clasping his hand in hers.

"Oh, how shall I thank you! How shall I serve you! What have I good enough to give you for all your love! I will be your slave, your happy slave. I will only live to please you!"

He lifted her from her lowly posture.

"Dear heart, when will you come to me! It must be soon." (Perhaps he feared that after all his courage might fail him.)

A cloud settled upon the beautiful face.

"Oh! they will never give me to you," she said, "and I may not marry you unless the chief says yes. He is a great man; and if he says I must take Beltrame I must obey."

The idea of asking a gipsy chief's consent to his marriage was repulsive to the young man; because he loved Zsnobia he was not therefore an admirer of her tribe. In fact, he had a decided aversion to the brawny rascals and withered crones of which it was chiefly composed.

"We will ask no one's consent," he said, somewhat sharply. "None but your parents could have any control over you, and as they are dead you are your own mistress. You will meet me here to-morrow evening at the same hour as to-night. You will say nothing of your plans to any creature; then I will take you to some large town, I haven't decided which, and as soon as possible we will be married."

She trusted and loved him entirely, but she hesitated a moment before giving him her promise—shrunk from the idea of leaving the old life, the old companions, who, whatever their faults, had been loyal and kind.

Harley Valence watched her changing face jealously.

"You love these people better than me!" he said, moodily.

"No, oh, no! But if I should not please you," she urged, humbly, "and you grew tired of me, you see, I couldn't go back to my people. It would break my heart, and they would revenge me."

"Why should you be doubtful of me?"

"I am only afraid of myself; and Harley, what will your mother say?"

"She will be angry at first, but we will find a way to appease her."

"You mean to make her pleased with me?" In a puzzled manner. "Ah, but first you must teach me to be a lady. Harley, if I come, and how can I stay away! you must promise not to take me to her so long as my ways could shame you. I know nothing—not so much as the little ones who run about your streets; and oh! Harley, you must tell her that the blood of many great men is in my veins—that I am not low born."

She spoke as a scion of some ducal family, not one of a despised and mysterious people; and he could hardly refrain from smiling.

"I promise all you ask; but, Zsnobia, you can't travel with me in that dress."

"No," a look of alarm in her splendid eyes, "we should be followed; and Beltrame would kill you. Me they would carry back and cast out of my tribe, because they would think it a disgrace for a Romany lass to choose a Georgio husband."

Again he smiled, then, growing grave, said,—

"I must bring you a cloak to cover this gay gown; and—have you a hat?"

She gave him a glance of exquisite surprise.

"A hat! ah, no! In rain or sun I wear such a thing as this," touching her orange head-gear.

"Then I must beg, borrow, or steal one," laughing. "What a metamorphosis I shall effect. And now, sweetheart, I must keep you here no longer; it is growing dark, and your absence will be noticed. Kiss me, and say good-bye."

"For a whole long day! Ah, good-bye, good-bye," and she clung to him. "You will be kind to me. I shall not have anyone but you."

A moment later he stood alone, watching the beautiful figure gliding amongst the trees. Then, when he could see her no longer, he turned and directed his steps towards his friend's house.

He was in a very strange state of mind, and far too excited to sleep. He knew he was risking a great deal by choosing to marry Zsnobia Lee, but he loved her far too well to plot against her virtue or her peace.

Zsnobia stole through the wood until she came to an open space where tents were pitched and camp fires burning brightly; she leaned against a tree, and looked upon the picturesque scene with melancholy eyes. To-morrow, she was leaving it all behind; to-morrow, she was to begin a new, untried life.

A few men and some older women were smoking and talking at intervals; but the girls and youths were dancing to the sound of a cracked fiddle, and their gay voices came towards Zsnobia, softened by the distance, and thrilled her with indelible pain. One woman was cooking some birds, which most certainly had never been purchased; but Zsnobia would not think them less savoury because of that, her ideas concerning mutton and fowls being extremely shadowy. Apart from all the rest stood a young man, slender and slenely, lithe as an antelope, with a handsome but sullen face. This was Beltrame Lee, Zsnobia's cousin, and the husband her tribe had chosen for her. He refused to join in the sports, and from time to time cast furtive glances round as though searching for the girl; and at last a brighter flame flickering in her direction revealed her to him. He hastened to her side, and muttered something in their own patois, to which she listened disdaintfully, but made no answer.

"Where have you been?" he demanded. "To meet this lover who dares not be seen with you in the day! Who talks to you softly, and swears he loves you! Idiot! Ask him if he will marry you! Are you caught by his fine white hands; by the glitter of his gold?" He paused, as if waiting for her to speak, but she maintained a rigid silence.

"Tell me truly; did you meet him?"

She nodded.

"Then it's time to make you hear some."



You've got to listen to me now; to-night I spoke to the chief, and we are to be married in a week; then let the Georgio cast his eyes upon you if he dare! Are you deaf and dumb that you treat me like a dog? My girl, I'll change all that soon, when I'm your master! Do you hear! A week from now you will be my own to do as I like with."

"Very well; it is no good to fight against the chief's orders," she answered, quietly; but there was a very dangerous gleam in her dark eyes; "and if I am to be free only seven seven days I must make the most of my time;" and quitting his side she ran towards the dancers, and soon was whirling round with the gayest of them. Beltrame swore a very ugly oath, and went to his tent, neither did he appear again that night.

Anyone who had studied Zenobia closely the following day would have noticed a nervousness in her manner totally new to it; a restlessness never observable before. She was particularly amiable to Beltrame, apparently forgetful of his words and manner, the previous night; she gave him her brightest smiles, and kindest speeches, charming the frown from his brow, and the sullen look from his eyes.

But she was unfeignedly thankful when towards evening several of the men started from camp on a mysterious errand, the success of which would be known at supper time; and retiring to her tent she began to set her small affairs in order. Her heart was very heavy, for, rough as her people were, they had been kind to her, and she was breaking away from all old habits; she knew nothing of the life to which she was going, and if Harley failed her, she would be alone in the world. She knew, too, that according to Romany ideas she would be for ever disgraced by her marriage, and he who followed and took her life would be honoured by every member of the tribe.

She stole out at last into the gathering dusk, and went swiftly and safely by all the tents until she came to the chief's. He was standing outside; a tall, muscular figure, with a certain weird dignity about it, and he called her by her name; she obeyed the call with fast beating heart.

"Where are you going?" he asked gruffly, and regarded her with stern eyes.

She hesitated, being all unused to lying, and he repeated his inquiry.

"I am tired of the camp," she said, slowly, all the lovely colour leaving her exquisite face.

He stepped to her side, and laid his heavy hand upon her shoulder. "Don't lie to me!" he said, fiercely; "you are going to meet the white-handed Georgio!"

She was silent, knowing it was a grave misdemeanour to rebel against his authority, or answer insolently; and he went on, impatiently,—

"Seven days from now you will marry your cousin; it is my will, and you know what they get who go against me. What would you have! He is of your people; he is handsome; quick with the anare; ready to join in all our foraging parties; and it is not well that you, the most beautiful of our maidens, should be the plaything of a stranger."

The hot colour flushed into her face, but she said, quietly,—

"You speak without cause. I am willing to marry Beltrame if he wants me to, and—and I was going to look out for him—to tell him so."

The chief gazed into the deep, dark eyes searchingly, and seeing that they did not waver, said,—

"If you're lying, you'll suffer for it," and he swore a terrible oath; "if not—well, go and meet him," and he pushed her away.

Glad enough to be released, she sped towards the thickest growth of trees, and presently came to the trying spot where Harley Valence was waiting for her.

"Quick, quick!" she said, breathlessly; "in a little while they'll be back, and Beltrame will guess all. They will track us down, and the dogs are keen of scent. Give me the cloak!"

He folded it about her with loving care; but when he would have taken her in his arms and

caressed her she set him aside with strong, impatient hands.

"No, no; not yet; we are not safe. What have you there?"

"A hat. I stole it out of the housekeeper's room; put it on, Zenobia."

She obeyed with a disdainful scowl, and Harley burst into a loud laugh.

"What a transformation! Oh, I wish you could see yourself; you look exquisitely funny. Be quick, and let us start."

"Don't laugh so loud, you will be heard; and it ain't a good joke that's all on one side."

He was quiet in a moment, and, securing one small brown hand, hurried her through the bracken and bushes, out towards the open ground.

They almost ran, fear lending speed to Zenobia's feet; and it was not long before they reached the high road. Here a dog-cart awaited them, and Kieibra, Harley's favourite mare, carried them on to the nearest railway station.

"Where are we going?" the girl asked, when they were safely locked in a first-class carriage.

"To Southampton first; there we will be married. Oh, sweetheart, sweetheart, it is good to have won you."

The dark eyes were troubled; the sweet mouth tremulous.

"Love," she said, scarcely above a whisper, "Love, it's not too late yet to go back. Not too late for you. Will you go?"

"Never. You are dearer than all the world to me."

Her eyes were dimmed with unshed tears.

"You won't change? You won't let your people make you ashamed of me, or teach you to hate me?"

"No; oh, no! You are my life—the dearest, sweetest treasure a man ever had."

He took her in his arms, and kissed the sweet mouth, the heavily fringed lids, and counted all things well lost for her dear sake. Both were silent, both harassed with many thoughts.

The girl knew that her absence from the camp had been discovered, that already the hue and cry had been raised, that men and maidens alike condemned her, alike held her worthy of death, and her heart sank at the thought that one was for ever put out of their love; that her name would be a by-word amongst them.

And Harley was wondering how his mother and Verena would receive the news of his terrible *mésalliance*. He expected nothing but fierce reproaches from the former and icy contempt from the latter; and he rather shrank from the idea of meeting his old companions.

They reached Southampton in safety, and here he secured apartments for Zenobia, and quite interested the landlady in her. He himself adjourned to the nearest hotel, and waited with what patience he could for the hour which would give him his bride.

With the landlady's assistance he purchased such articles of dress as Zenobia needed, and prevailed upon the girl to array herself in them, although she protested stoutly that they were uncomfortable and hampered her movements.

Then, on a sunny day in June, they were married, and Harley carried his bride off to Spain, first writing a full account of all his doings to his lady mother.

There was grief and anger at Valence Rest when the news came. The mother vowed the same roof should not shelter her and her son's vagabond wife; that he had broken her heart, and disgraced her in the eyes of the whole world.

Verena Falkholm said very little, but her beautiful face was set and white, her blue eyes dark with rage at what she pleased to consider the indignity done her. And as she looked over the wide, fair acres of his estate, and saw her hope of possessing them come to naught, she said in her heart, "I will have my revenge. He has preferred a strolling gipsy to me. Let him take care!"

But Harley was sublimely unconscious of his mother's rage and Verena's hate. He had found a secluded house at a little distance from Madrid, and was deeply engaged in educating his

Her niece and intelligent questions amused and gratified him; and it was pleasant indeed to form her tastes, to mould her ideas; and, above all, he loved her, and his love grew with every fresh day, until she was indeed the breath of his life.

## CHAPTER II.

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale Her infinite variety."

Two years had passed since Harley Valence made his quixotic match, and now all the county was on the *qui vive*, because he was returning to his home, bringing his bride with him. Those two years had been very happy ones to him; in nothing had Zenobia disappointed him. Her beauty was more matured, more refined; she moved and spoke as a lady. It seemed she had forgotten the old life, the old habits; that she had, indeed, been born in the sphere to which he had raised her.

It was a lovely July evening, and Mrs. Valence sat at a window, looking out upon the high road. There was a frown upon the lady's brow, and a cruel light in her cold, gray eyes, which Verena marked with secret delight.

"They will be here soon," she said, "and we shall be expected to do honour to this fortunate vagrant. I wonder how she will meet us!"

Mrs. Valence moved impatiently, and her eyes flashed angrily.

"Do you imagine, Verena, that I will yield my place in the house to her! That I will daily endure her society, submit to her will!"

"If you don't," with a light laugh, "you will have to be content with the Dowry House. It is horribly poky, and you would be suffocated. Take my advice, Mrs. Valence, and make the best of a bad bargain, as I intend to do."

The elder woman looked at her surprisedly.

"Have you grown suddenly meek, Verena?" she asked, scornfully. "Does not this woman stand in the place you coveted; has she not won the man you loved?"

"Who said I loved your son? It is false! but I did covet a share in his goods, a position in the county, and wanted to reign here as mistress. Well, I failed to please him. Why should I waste my life in regret? I am only twenty, beautiful, and well born; shall I despair of winning an eligible parti? Poo!!" laughing again. "Have I not more lovers than any other girl of your acquaintance?"

Mrs. Valence looked at her perplexedly.

"You are an enigma to me, Verena; and can you honestly say you bear Mrs. Harley Valence no malice?"

"She is too low either for my scorn or my hate," retorted the girl, and moved her position that she might the better see her own exultant reflection.

She was tall as Zenobia, and more fully developed, with a complexion of dazzling fairness; blue eyes, and masses of deep gold hair, drawn in heavy coils about the crown of her head.

And to-night she had chosen a dress admirably calculated to enhance her charms. A composition of white silk and frosted tulle, and about her throat she wore a string of turquoises.

"We shall form a delightful contrast," she said, mockingly, "this black-browed beauty and myself; and I am wondering in what guise she will appear at table. A tartan plaid and a whip of orange silk about her throat would be effective."

Mrs. Valence frowned; her ward's levity displeased her.

"I shall not go down to meet her. Harley must bring her to me," she said, with the air of a queen. Then started as the carriage came in view round the bend of the road.

Verena rose.

"I shall go down to meet her. I am positively devoured with anxiety concerning my fortunate rival!"

In a little while the carriage bowed up the drive, and Verena went slowly downstairs to meet the young husband and wife.

She was considerably surprised when her eyes fell upon Zenobia. She had expected to confront a bold, handsome, but none the less

coarse-looking woman; and her dormant hate stirred to active life when she saw that her beauty was as nothing when compared with the radiant loveliness of the interloper.

Eyes dark as night, brilliant as stars; a face whose perfection was the realisation of a poet's dream; a queenly, noble figure, with a lithe grace it would be impossible to imitate.

Verena felt that she would have a hard fight for supremacy.

"Verena, this is kind," said Harley, leading Zenobia forward. "I am glad to make you known to my wife."

The blonde beauty hated him for his evident love for and pride in Zenobia, but she had been trained to mask her feelings; so she went forward with a little smile, and with outstretched welcoming hand. "I ought to be jealous of you, you are so beautiful; as it is, I can only admire you and hope we may be friends," she leaned forward as the spoke and kissed the scarlet mouth.

Ah! Zenobia was no match for this fair-faced woman; she could not meet cunning with cunning, or profess friendship with her lips, whilst hate was in her heart. Her beautiful eyes grew very tender as they rested on Verena.

"You have small need for jealousy," she said warmly; "has no one told you how exquisite you are!"

Verena laughed lightly.

"I believe Harley did once or twice," she answered lightly. "Now, let us go up to Mrs. Valence; she is anxious to see you. She has been imagining all sorts of horrid things about you, and will be heartily glad to know her anxiety was needless."

Every word she uttered was sped with a wish to sting; but who could believe this when she smiled so sweetly and spoke in such gentle, welcoming tones!

"I hope you won't object to my residence here," she said, leading the way. "I have lived at Valence Rest from childhood, and hope I shall never leave it until I go to a home of my own. Do you think you can endure me, Mrs. Valence? And will you promise not to be jealous of my friendship with Harley," archly, "even though we once played at sweethearts?"

The beautiful, serene face of her rival did not change, her voice was sweet, and even as she said,—

"Harley chose me from all other women; I should be mad to doubt him."

As Verena turned swiftly and opened the drawing-room door her face was not good to see.

"Mrs. Valence, the wanderers have returned," she announced, gaily, "and already Mrs. Harley and I are sworn friends."

The elder woman rose, and first touching her son's hand with cold chill fingers, turned to Zenobia.

"You will like to change your dress," she said, "and dinner will be served in half an hour;" then she sank back in her chair, apparently forgetful of the girl's presence.

The dusky colour flooded Zenobia's face, and her eyes flashed fire, but she controlled herself admirably, and said,—

"I shall be glad if you will show me the way to my apartments, Miss Fairholm!"

Verena had not quite bargained for this, but she rose with alacrity.

"I shall be pleased to acquaint you with all the nooks and crannies of the place, unless Harley forestalls me. Come," and she led the way, leaving mother and son together.

The young man advanced, looking very wrathful.

"Mother, it is well we should understand each other at the outset. This is my home, and my wife is its honoured mistress; if you are willing to treat her with the deference and courtesy she deserves, well and good; if not, you must remove to the Dover House."

Mrs. Valence covered her face with her hands and sobbed out a lament upon the ingratitude of children. The shame her son had brought upon their ancient and honoured name; the readiness with which he cast her aside for a gipsy adventuress.

Harley stopped her with an impatient gesture, and a word more forcible than polite.

"Listen to me, mother. There is no need for recrimination; you are very dear to me, but my wife is dearer, and any insult offered her will anger me more than the vilest calumny urged against myself. You know the conditions upon which you can alone remain at Valence Rest; it would be well to observe them."

"If you send me away all the country will cry shame upon you; and do you suppose that you will be received by any one family? No, your misalliance has put you altogether outside the pale."

"We shall see," sternly; "my wife is as virtuous as she is beautiful; and in our own set the two things do not always go hand in hand; she is educated and refined; she can hold her own, and will do so. It would be as well, mother, to remember she is a resolute woman."

"Have you already sunk to the level of a hen-pecked husband?" she sneered.

He laughed heartily.

"Wait and see! And now, if you will excuse me, I will run off to dress," and without another word, he left her.

In the days immediately following Mrs. Valence discovered she had no mean antagonist to compete with, and as she had a holy horror of residing at the Dover House she was compelled to treat Zenobia with some degree of courtesy.

The young wife took the management of the household in her own hands, and governed wisely and well; she was generous and just, and soon became popular with the servants.

One day Verena said with her sweetest smile,—

"I wonder how it is, you, who spent eighteen years amongst the gipsies, should so easily acquire the manners and accomplishments of a lady!"

Zenobia smiled.

"My instructor was the man I loved, and it was easy to learn all things for his sake!"

"And don't you ever wish to see your people again? Have you quite forgotten them?"

"No, no; how could one forget! I love them still. Sometimes I long to meet them once again; they were good to me, and the same blood flows in our veins."

"But it would never do for the Mistress of Valence Rest to associate with vagrants," insolently; but Zenobia seemed lost in thought, and for awhile did not reply. At last she said, "When I left my tribe I left it for ever. I gave my life into my husband's hands to do with it as he would."

Verena laughed harshly.

"What a model wife! You will be a shining light in this depraved nineteenth century; and one hardly expects such moral precepts from a girl of your race."

For once the young wife suffered her resentment to appear.

"Pardon," she said, with some scorn; "my birth is superior to your own; the blood of kings is in my veins."

"This is absurd. My dear Zenobia, you would find it quite impossible to prove your statement. Gipsies are nothing more than wandering vagrants, poachers, cozeners, fortune-tellers. But you are perfection."

"If we are all you say (and I deny it), who made us so! Have we not been persecuted for endless ages, driven from country to country. Have we not patiently and silently borne indignities, scoffs, and scourges?"

"You are excited," laughed the other, "and most beautiful in your excitement," and there the conversation ended.

The next day Zenobia gave her first dinner party, and Verena watched anxiously for some defect in the arrangements, but found none. She amiably desired that at the last moment the guests would fail to appear, and was savagely disappointed when carriage after carriage rolled up to the door.

Where she had been wont to receive adulation she was now a mere nonentity, and her rage increased with every passing moment. The young hostess was superb, and about her throat

she wore a necklace of rubies—Harley's latest extravagance. But she had utterly refused to adopt the so-called full dress of an English lady. Her gown was cut square at the throat and filled in with lace, and when Verena laughed at her for her primitive notions she retorted,—

"I heard some ladies in the town commenting on the dresses of ballet girls; to my mind they were infinitely more modest than the ordinary woman's evening dress."

"Ah! you have a penchant for spangles naturally."

"These girls wore no spangles, but tight-fitting garments, calculated to display any beauty of symmetry, and yet not verging on the immodest."

She moved away with a little impatient gesture, and devoted herself to her guests. All through the long evening she played her part perfectly, and even those who professed not to admire her were compelled to acknowledge Harley's wife was perfect in ways and speech.

She sang to them in a wild, sweet voice, accompanying herself on the harp—songs she had learned in Spain, songs she remembered from childhood.

Then Verena took her seat at the piano, and after some brilliant execution favoured the company with songs chiefly relating to gipsy peccadilloes; the cunning and ingratitude of gipsy women.

There were very few who did not condemn her line of conduct; who did not glance anxiously at Zenobia, whose face had flushed daskily. But when Verena moved from her seat, she merely said with a faint, cold smile,—

"You have hardly done justice to the women of my race," and from that hour a doubt of Verena's truth stirred in her heart.

She quickly became popular in the county, and that without much effort on her part. Her parties were successes, her toilets perfection, and day by day Harley's love for her increased. He took her to town, where, if she had chosen, she might have posed as a professional beauty. He was delighted with the homage paid her, the plaudits lavished upon her style, her loveliness, and as his mother said sneeringly, "Was more infatuated with her than ever."

So two years passed by. Verena had attained her majority, but though not unsought was still unwed, and resided at Valence Rest. She was waiting for the revenge which she had sworn to have, and it seemed further off than ever.

To add to her mortification, a son had been born to Harley—a beautiful child, so like the mother that Harley was inordinately proud of it, and Verena thought if she could but strike him through his child she could revenge herself on Zenobia too.

She waited and watched, professing great love for the little one, great affection for the mother, and confessing nothing to her late guardian.

"Whilst I hold my own counsel I am safe; and my day will come!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### "WEAVING HER WEB."

"ZENOBIA, there are gipsies in the moat, and I was wondering if any of them are old friends or acquaintances of yours."

Zenobia sat, her child on her knee, the very picture of a happy wife and mother. She looked up now with a flush on her face, for there was a covert sneer in Verena's tones.

"How long have they camped there! I thought Harley objected to their occupying the wood; he says the fires spoil the grass and trees."

"Of course they do; but since his marriage he has a predilection for the nomad race. I wonder what dark arts you used to enslave him!"

"I practised no magic," teasing the child up in the air. "I fancy for once the poet's idea of love at first sight was realised. Once again, baby—higher still."

"I wish you would talk quietly; I've a fit of the blues this morning, and I want you to coax them away. Pay no heed to the child down; he will do well enough by himself."

Zenobia sat down, still clasping the little one close.

"Have you seen these people, Verena, and what else is their encampment?"

"I haven't been near the place for a week. I am rather nervous with regard to such people; the men are mostly footpads, and do not hesitate to attack defenceless women who are likely to prove good spoil."

The other flushed hotly.

"You are mistaken, Verena; there are bad people in every tribe and nation. The Georgios (unconsciously slipping back into the old way of speech) are not infallible. They, too, drink and lie and steal."

"You are positively angry," with a light laugh; "and why should you be? Have you not separated yourself from your clan? Are you not one of us?"

Zenobia looked troubled.

"Oae never forgets," she said, simply; "and if they were angry with me where was the wonder?"

"You mean you disappointed them, that you were to have married your handsome cousin? What was his name? And why did you not call Percy after him, in memory of old days?"

"Because I hope my boy will be a better and nobler man than Beltrame!"

"What a romantic name! And I like a man with a spice of mischief in him; I wonder will you ever see him again, and under what circumstances!" She rose as she spoke. "Will you go out this morning; or shall you stay at home until Harley returns? Why, if he were to absent himself for six months you would become quite a recluse. It is such a bright fine morn, and we shall not have many more like it! This is the twenty-seventh, and what a glorious September it has been!"

"Yes, the leaves have scarcely changed yet, and few if any have fallen!"

Miss Fairholm leaned a moment over the young heir, playfully pinching his cheek.

"Good-bye, you most enviable of mortals, Good-bye, Zenobia! I must be content with a solitary stroll!"

A little later she left the house, and, making a considerable detour, found her way at last into the wood. Soon the sound of many voices assured her she was near the encampment, and, stooping behind some bushes, she watched the moving figures curiously. Could it be these were Zenobia's people, and that at length her triumph was near?

She had heard tales of deadly revenge perpetrated by them upon offending members of their race, and she thought if she could meet Beltrame Lee the game would be in her hands; she would not hesitate to give her rival into his power.

Perhaps her light garments attracted attention; however that might be, a pair of keen eyes had taken note of the kneeling figure, and a stealthy form was gradually drawing nearer. She started with a little cry when a small, slender but strong hand grasped her shoulder, and, springing to her feet, said, angrily,—

"How dare you touch me? Take your hand from me!" For, whatever she had said to the contrary to Zenobia, she was no coward. Her blue eyes flashed, and her beautiful face was flushed with scornful pride, and yet she could not repress a little thrill of admiration, as she looked on the handsome, dusky young man beside her.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, roughly. "Why are you spying upon us?" "I was not spying upon you," haughtily; "and only your guilty conscience could make you imagine such a thing! I was only curious to see your camp."

"And now you've seen it you'd better go. We don't like sneaks."

"You had far better remain civil; because I have power to make you leave this part of the country at once."

He regarded her sternly.

"You've got to prove that ain't a boast!"

"I can easily. I live at the house yonder, and its master, the owner of this land, is my greatest

friend; any rudeness to me would be hardly punished."

"You're ready with your threats, and that ain't wise. I could rob you of these pretty toys if I chose. I could press all the breath out of your body and none know it! My people would help me and make your burkin' short!"

She never wavered, never trembled, and the gipsy could scarcely fail to admire her courage.

"You are talking stupidly, and you know it," she said, coldly. "You dare not harm me. Let me pass!"

"Not till you tell me what brought you here," he said, sullenly; but he relaxed his hold on her, and withdrew a pace from her.

She shook herself as though to cast away the contamination of his touch, then answered, slowly,—

"I came to have my fortune told, but did not wish to be seen by all those low brutes," by a gesture indicating the men lounging about the fire.

The gipsy's dark face grew darker; but he said only,—

"I will fetch a wise woman, and don't you try running away from me. It won't do. I can see your light dress amongst the bushes, and should soon catch you up!"

"I shall not run away," contemptuously; "but it would be as well to warn my friend that his preserves are in danger!"

"Who is your friend?" staggered by her coolness and her taunt.

"Harley Valence," looking full into his eyes. "He is a gentleman, but he married a woman of your race!"

The rich flush of health faded from his cheek, and all unconsciously he grasped her hand.

"Tell me her name. You shall not go until you do!"

"She was called Zenobia Lee!" still regarding him intently.

He flung up his hands with a gesture of wild triumph.

"Found! found!" he cried, with fierce exultation, and then he muttered something she did not understand.

Still she stood watching him with pitiless blue eyes, and saw that he trembled from head to foot.

"Who are you?" she questioned, "and what do you know of Mrs. Valence?"

He regarded her cunningly.

"Why do you want to know? That you may warn her! That you may say danger threatens her! Ah! but you must tell her, too, that having once found her I will never let her go again."

"You are Beltrame Lee, and you have nothing now to fear from me. I am not her friend, rather her enemy, for she robbed me of all I strove for! She stands in my place, queens it where I should reign. You want revenge, so do I; but it must be revenge that touches her alone."

His dusky eyes gleamed with an ugly light.

"What would you do to get your heart's desire?" he asked seditiously.

"Anything; her husband should be mine! Her name, her wealth, her position, are all stolen from me. We have one wish in common, you and I; let us join hands, and see if two heads are not better than one!"

"You are a brave woman, and you are cruel; if you hate her you won't go against me. You lost your husband; I lost my wife! Well, then, let us live for revenge!"

"With all my heart!"

"Come with me. I know a little hollow where we may be alone; and speak low, our people have sharp ears."

"And sharp eyes," laughing lightly. "Lead the way, Monsieur Beltrame."

When they reached the spot of which he had spoken he turned sharply, and confronted her.

"What will you do? What will you dare?"

"Anything that you will venture, so long as it doesn't entail discovery."

"Speak plain, and don't use long words. Will you let me do as I like with him?"

"No, I won't!" boldly. "He and his property are to remain untouched; but, if you

would wound her most, take her child from her."

"We don't want more young 'uns in camp than we've got. I'll leave the little 'un to him, just to comfort him when his wife's gone. She walks in silks and fine jewels now; but she'll come back to her own ways soon, whether she wants or not. She'll have to give him up, and stand afore all of us to be judged, and there ain't one as will forgive her what she's done. Oh, my dainty leddy, don't be afraid but what we'll hold our own. And when she's clean gone, what'll you do?"

"Marry him," boldly. "But you must convince him she is dead; or, if not dead, dishonoured—he must think her false. I will teach him that lesson, and you must help me."

"And what'll be my wage?" he asked, with an access of covetousness.

"You shall be handsomely paid—but your reward must be in accordance with your work. I must leave you now, or my absence will be discovered and made much of. To-morrow I will be here again at the same time. And cannot you feign a friendship for Zenobia? cannot you entice her here?"

"You must give me time to think. My brain ain't so swift and clear as yours. And if you could make me a little present to-day, leddy, I would be obliged."

She emptied the contents of her purse into his ready palm.

"You ain't told me your name yet, leddy. Oh, don't fear as I shall tell it again."

"Verena Fairholm," she answered, and stole through dim alleys of trees to Valence Rest.

There was a deep, glad triumph in her heart as she thought that the hour of victory was near, that Zenobia should be dethroned, and she, herself, should queen it in the old home of the Valences.

All that day she was so bright, so eager to please, that Zenobia regarded her with wonder, and Mrs. Valence with suspicion. As she passed that lady's room on her way downstairs she called to her,—

"Verena, come here."

She obeyed, with a smile on her mouth, a strange look in her blue eyes.

Mrs. Valence laid her white hands upon her shoulders.

"What has made you so jubilant? What mischief are you hatching?"

Verena threw back her golden head with a gesture of amusement.

"How shrewd you are! Ah, well, dear friend, if you are curious it is my pleasure to humour you. There are gipsies in the wood; and now you may look out for domestic squalls."

"What do you mean? Do you suppose Zenobia would go back to her own people, or risk Harley's displeasure for them? She isn't such a fool."

Verena laughed contemptuously.

"I find I wasted a compliment upon you when I called you shrewd. See; you and I have not forgiven her intrusion in the family. We will watch for her downfall."

The elder woman flashed hotly.

"I will do nothing dishonourable; and if I supposed you were bent upon tempting her to disgrace our name I would go at once to Harley and tell him all the truth. For my son's sake, for the sake of her little child, I will not have her dishonoured!"

Again Verena laughed, although there was a dim wonder in her eyes at what she thought stupidity on Mrs. Valence's part.

"I shall do nothing," she said. "I shall only watch her; and I am convinced she will follow the bent of her own will. And, now, if you have quite finished with me, I will go down. There are several eligible parties present to-night; who knows but I may succeed in capturing the best of them all!"

That evening, when chance placed her beside Zenobia, she whispered,—

"I had a most romantic adventure this morning, dear. I met a handsome gipsy youth, who volunteered to tell me my fortune. In return, I asked him his name, and was fairly confused when he said Beltrame Lee."

The rich bloom died out of Zenobia's face. "He here!" she said, in a sharp tone. "His coming means mischief!"

"No, indeed. In my confusion I said, 'Why, you are Zenobia's cousin,' and, of course, after that he wanted to know all about you, and expressed himself delighted to hear of your prosperity. But if you wish to see him, I would advise you not to venture too near the encampment—he tells me the tribe is at enmity with you."

"As he is too in his heart. Do I not know him! His implacable hate, his persistent will. He means no good to me or mine."

She was ill at ease all through the evening, and Harley watched her with anxious eyes. Verena was not slow to notice this, and when he walked out upon the balcony she followed him there.

"How worried you look, Harley! What has happened, or about to happen?"

"Nothing of any importance; at least, to my knowledge. Why do you ask?"

"I thought you were vexed because those gipsies have located themselves on your land. Do you suppose they will try to claim privileges because of their kinship to Zenobia?"

"What are you talking about? I did not know anything of this matter. And you don't suppose all gipsies are related each to the other."

"But if this tribe should be the very one from which you chose your wife, would you allow any interview between her and them?"

"Most certainly not! Mrs. Valence does not consort with tramps and blackguards. Does she know they have settled here?"

"Yes; I told her. I saw some of them this morning; and one was a handsome young fellow, whom his companions called Beltrame. Not an uncommon name, I believe, among gipsies."

#### CHAPTER IV.

"To be wroth with one we love,  
Doth work like madness in the brain."

BELTRAME lost no time in opening operations. He coaxed one of the girls to go to Valence Rest professedly to tell the maiden's fortunes, but really to obtain an interview with his cousin. The girl was very loth to obey, but his will had long been her law, and in this instance prevailed as usual.

Meg found her way to the servants' entrance, and was speedily employed in manipulating palms and weaving wondrous stories of handsome husbands and future grandeur; and when there were no more victims left, she boldly desired to see the mistress.

"Oh, her fortune's told already!" said a pert housemaid; "and if mine is half as good you won't catch me grumbling. No, my good girl, I shan't be the one to fetch her down."

"But," said the wily Meg, "if 'twas for her good, wouldn't you then? Ah! my pretty laddy (for a laddy you will be) there is a great trouble comin' to her, and I can tell her how to miss it. Sure, the gipsy does not lie!"

"A great trouble! Oh! tell us what! Is the master to die or to lose his fortune?" and all the women gathered about her with open mouths and wide eyes.

"It must be to herself I speak. What I say must be to her, and we must be alone. Go fetch her here!"

The cook, a firm believer in astrology, volunteered to do this, and ran upstairs to Zenobia's room.

"If you please, ma'am, there's a gipsy downstairs asking for you; she says she must see you; that there's trouble hanging over you."

Zenobia stayed to hear no more. Her beautiful face was white, and her heart beat loud and fast with a thousand undefined fears; she ran down to the servants' hall, and stretching out her hands, cried, "Meg! Meg!" but the gipsy avoided her touch, and looked sullenly at the beautifully-clad figure.

"Come with me to my own room, Meg!" said the gracious voice; "we shall be undis-

turbed there," and she led the way to a small, elegantly furnished boudoir.

Her companion looked round the dainty apartment with its sumptuous hangings, its silver and crystal ornaments, then said, sulkily, "My! ain't you grown a laddy; it's a wonder you'll speak to such as me."

"Oh, Meg! as if I could forget old days or old friends."

"You found it easy to leave old friends," the girl retorted; "ay, and even the man what loved you. Was it for the Georgio's gold you sold yourself?"

Zenobia flushed dusky.

"He was, and is, dearer to me than all the world beside; the best and noblest of men; the kindest, truest husband."

Meg stirred impatiently.

"You've got the Georgio ways; you speak like them; you move like them. Zenobia, did you ever know a Romany forgive such wrong as you did to Beltrame?"

"I never wronged him," quietly, "and it is not well to reproach me now. Tell me what trouble threatens me or mine, and who sent you to warn me!"

"There ain't no trouble that I know of, that was only an excuse to get near you. I've got a message for you from Beltrame."

"Sit down, Meg. What is it?"

"He begs you, for the sake of old days, and because he always loved you well, to meet him any hour to-day. He can't lightly forget you, and he won't keep you long. Oh!" as Zenobia hesitated, "you needn't be afraid o' any harm; he wouldn't hurt a hair o' your handsome head."

"I am not afraid, and you know it; but I do not think my husband would like me to meet him secretly. If he wants to see me, why does he not come to the house?"

"Would he cross his enemy's threshold? Would he let your fine servants see what sort o' man your cousin is? No; an' if you won't come, well, you must take the consequence. It ain't good to anger Beltrame Lee."

Zenobia stood a moment in thought, then said,—

"Say I will meet him just beyond the encampment a little after five this afternoon; but I shall tell my husband that I intend doing so. I have no secrets from him."

"You can please yourself, but I shouldn't say nothing to him, if I prized him as high as you do. He would want to come with you, and then the two men would quarrel and praps fight. And Beltrame can use his knife to some purpose."

"I don't like secrecy. I hate to deceive him; and yet what you say is true, and so, Meg, I will be silent. Now, won't you shake hands?"

"No; you've disgraced yourself and left your tribe. I guess you'd better not let the others see you. You know what they'd do if you got in their power."

"Yes, I should get small mercy; there isn't one but would lift his hand against me, and think he did his duty in robbing my husband and child of me."

"You have a child!" questioned Meg, with a slight softening in her voice and eye.

"Yes, come and see him!" And without waiting an answer she led the way to a large airy nursery, where the baby was rolling upon the floor and cooing to his heart's content. The mother lifted him and turned his bonny face towards Meg, with a touch that in itself was a caress.

"Isn't he a beauty! And he takes such notice of things already. Harley is so proud of him, and so fond—"

"Give him to me—at least he ain't wronged me." And she kissed the tiny face passionately, perhaps because she fancied some likeness existed between him and his graceless cousin, Beltrame. Then suddenly she burst into tears, and, catching Zenobia's hand, said, "Oh! why can't he forget you! Ain't I loved him long and true? Ain't I willin' to serve him all my life, and now they talk of marryin' me to another man; but I'll die first!"

Zenobia took the child from her and laid

him in his cot; then she put an arm about the girl.

"Poor Meg! I didn't dream of this; and, oh! indeed, dear, you must try to hope all will come right between you. When he sees how good you are (and you were always ready to do kind things) he will turn to you."

"What!" cried the other, scornfully; "can he forget your bonny face. How could his liking fall on me! There ain't nothin' in me to please him." And she struck herself savagely across the cheek. But the next moment she laughed in a hard way. "What a fool I am to stand here talkin' when he's waitin' for me! Dawdlin' don't please Beltrame. Show me the way out; I get muddled and stifled in this place."

Zenobia let her out by a side entrance and went back to the nursery, knowing that there she would have some chance for thought. She was very uneasy at the idea of hiding anything from Harley, but considered herself in honour bound to keep her word. But when he joined her she could not meet his eye, and was altogether so constrained in her manner as to excite his suspicion.

About four he proposed she should dress and walk out with him. She flushed deep crimson over throat and brow.

"I must be getting lazy," she said, confusedly; "for I would really prefer staying at home, if you have no objection to my doing so."

"Please yourself," he answered, coldly; "I shall not press you to accompany me."

It was the first time he had ever spoken vexedly to her, and her heart ached. She longed to cling about him and confess all. But Verena was present and prevented this. She looked up with her sweetest smile and said,—

"I am quite sure Zenobia is tired; she has been amusing Master Percy all day—and when baby comes the husband must be content to sink into the second place in his wife's regard."

Zenobia could not speak; she recognized the covert malice in Verena's remark, but felt guiltily she was not acting fairly towards Harley, and dared not defend herself; and the enemy pursued her advantage further.

"If you will accept my company in lieu of Zenobia's I shall be glad to go with you."

"You have taken a violent fancy for exercise lately, Verena," remarked Mrs. Valence, with a peculiar look at her late ward.

But she answered lightly, and without a shadow of embarrassment,—

"Have I not! I find it suits me, and I have a vast regard for my own well-being. I will dress quickly, Harley. I know how impatient you are (with an arch look). Zenobia, you will not be jealous?"

"No," proudly, but Mrs. Valence noticed she seemed ill at ease, and when Harley and Verena were gone, said coldly,—

"You are very foolish to refuse to please your husband, especially when he is daily thrown into the society of a young and handsome woman. Don't you know that 'variety is charming,' and her very 'unlikeness' to you may prove her greatest charm?"

Zenobia looked distressed.

"You do not understand," she said, gently.

"To-day I could not go, and could not explain my reasons for refusing. Surely you believe me?"

"I think you are honest, although I do not pretend to like you; and if it were not for your child I should long have left the house; but I love him."

"Then surely your love for him is a link between us?"

"Not so; there can be nothing in common between a gipsy woman and me."

Silence fell upon them, and when Zenobia rose to prepare for her walk Mrs. Valence did not seem to see or hear her.

She dressed quickly, and stole downstairs like a ghost, and was soon in the very heart of the wood. She could hear the old familiar voices, the old, unforgetting *patois*. Dimly she could descry moving figures in the bright-hued gowns, and her thoughts went back to her careless vagabond childhood, until her eyes filled with tears,

and she stretched out longing hands to those old companions.

A sob rose to her lips, and her breath was sharply drawn. How she longed to exchange a kindly word with them—how cut off she was from them!

Yet their griefs were hers; she was ready to sympathise with and to help them, for was she not one of them! Her quick ear caught the faint sound of rustling footsteps. She started, turned, and confronted her cousin.

He looked haggard, and his eyes were blood-shot.

"Beltrame," she said, gently enough, "you have been drinking again. Why will you do so?"

"I do it to forget my misery," he answered, in a low, strained voice, "but I am not drunk, and I shall not hurt you, Zenobia. How beautiful you are! and how brave you are dressed!"

Her hand lay in his, and her wondrous eyes, filled with tears, were looking into his.

"Why have you sent for me? Is it to say you forgive me the pain I have caused you?"

"That's about the size of it. I can't stand out against you no longer. But I wouldn't come up to The Rest, to disgrace you; and I ain't forgiven him. You'd ha' married me if it hadn't been for him. But I ain't here to talk over old grievances; I only wanted to see you, and to ask if you was happy."

"Ah, yes! if only sometimes I might come amongst you. Oh, Beltrame, I am rich now, and there is so much I could do for you. Don't you think our people will ever forgive me?"

"I'm sure they won't," and he glanced furtively round. Then, suddenly taking both her hands in his, he said, with great earnestness, "But I'm staunch and true, and I'll think o' you always. There ain't anything I wouldn't do for you!"

The beautiful eyes were full of gratitude and confidence in him, and, seen at a distance, they might well be mistaken for lovers. Indeed, as Verena sighted them, she said, with a pretty, low laugh,—

"Oh, Harley, turn back; we are disturbing a pair of romantic lovers! How picturesque the woman is! Why, it is Zenobia," and she pulled her companion back into the deeper shadows.

She had chosen the time and place well, and now her only anxiety was to prevent any explanation occurring between man and wife. She glanced into Harley's angry face.

"My dear Harley, pray don't be rash. Isn't it natural Zenobia should wish to see her people? and pray rest assured she will tell you all about the meeting on her return. Let us take the opposite path home. Oh, what a handsome fellow her companion would be were he properly dressed."

He suffered her to draw him away, not daring to trust himself to speak. He was consumed by jealousy and hate. Could it be true that Zenobia had persistently deceived; that, after all, Beltrame was the man she loved, and she had married him merely to possess those good things he could give? The woman beside him fanned the flame higher, although he thought she was striving to suppress it.

"I know, Harley, that you are angry, and perhaps justly so; but is it likely your wife could prefer that man to you? You are thinking she married you for your riches and position, but that all the while she loved him! Pray disabuse your mind of such an idea. When she returns, she will explain all to you, and you will laugh at your fears—be sorry for your doubts."

He made no answer. Already the leaven of jealousy was transforming his nature, making him suspicious of all Zenobia's actions; of that past life of hers of which he knew so little. But he loved her, and would give her one chance to retrieve her error. If she came to him and frankly confessed all, he would take her back to his confidence and esteem; if not—well, he dared not think of the alternative.

Sick at heart he sought the study and watched for his wife's return; and when he saw her steal into the house, after a covert glance at the windows, his last hope died within him.

It was a very stern-faced man who strode into the dining-room that day; he had no kindly word for the beautiful anxious-eyed wife; no pleasant gossip over the events of the past twenty-four hours; and Zenobia knew in some way she had angered him terribly. He waited for an explanation, and, when none came, condemned her utterly.

So as the slow days wore on, he watched her movements; knew how often she met Beltrame; told himself she was false to the core, and thought how best to avenge his wrongs. The distance between them grew daily greater, and Verena was always near to fan his jealous resentment into fiercer flame.

Those were not happy days for Zenobia. And there were many hours when she knelt by her child, sobbing and praying that both might die because "Harley now loved Verena!"

## CHAPTER V.

"There is no spot where thou and I  
Together for an hour could breathe."

ONE meeting led to another. Beltrame had always some excuse for requesting an interview; and if Zenobia at first refused, would threaten Harley with such dire revenge, that out of love for him she changed her resolution.

One morning, as she made her way to the appointed place, Meg darted out before her, and said abruptly, "You're going to meet him again; are you sorry now you didn't marry him? And do you think he's forgiven you?" She laughed shrilly. "What a fool you are, to be sure! Why Beltrame Lee hates you with all his strength, and if you don't take care it's ruined you'll be!"

"I don't understand you, Meg, and I think it is jealousy makes you speak thus. Believe me, I regard my cousin only as a cousin, and no words of love have passed between us. I am glad, indeed, to feel we are friends again; and I shall be unfeignedly thankful when he is gone from here. I fancy I am watched; certainly, since you settled here my husband has changed towards me."

Meg looked cunningly at her a moment, and then, as if convinced against her will, she said, slowly,—

"I believe you; you weren't ever good at lying and, for the sake of old days I'll tell you something to put you on your guard. All of us know now that the house up you is your home, and some of us have settled to punish you by stealin' away your baby. Take care of him," and without another word she plunged into the thickest part of the wood, leaving Zenobia a prey to the greatest anxiety.

She was so manifestly disturbed, that Beltrame regarded her with suspicion, and pried her with questions which she answered evasively.

"You must let me go now, Beltrame," she said. "I have brought the money you need, and I would be glad if you would say good-bye now and not see me any more. I am wronging Harley by these secret meetings. Oh! if you are really and truly my friend, you will not wish to endanger my happiness and my good name; you will do your best to keep both intact."

He was silent a moment, his eyes cast down as if in thought, then he said, with every appearance of frankness,—

"You're right, Zenobia, I ought to ha' thought of that afore. It ain't just the thing to ask you to risk so much. Well, I'll do as you want me to. I'll say good-bye, and not try to see you any more, or even send you messages. Shake hands, and let's part. It's best."

She was glad to find him so reasonable, and thanked him warmly, not noticing his peculiar smile; and, having spoken her last words to him, hurried towards home and up to the nursery.

She could have sobbed for very joy when she found her child safe in his cot and sleeping peacefully; but Mrs. Harley was present, and she was compelled to hide her agitation as best she could. But her heart was very heavy, and life seemed to have grown suddenly dark to her.

If she had dared, she would have begged Harley to expel the gipsies from the wood, but she was too terribly afraid of any revenge they might take for the fabled indignity done them—she knew her own people so well.

When Mrs. Valence had gone she called the nurse, a grave-faced woman, who was much attached to both mistress and child.

"Matthews," she said, a note of anxiety in her low, rich voice, "you will be very careful not to leave baby an instant, and on no pretence to allow him to leave your charge?—I have a particular reason for asking this."

"I will be very sure to remember, ma'am," answered the woman, easily guessing Zenobia's fear. "And if you please, ma'am, Lady's you better lie down, you look so white and worn-like!"

Words of kindness were not now her everyday food, and the tears rose to her eyes; she turned away quickly that Matthews might not see them.

"I am very well, thank you," she said, in an uncertain way; "but I'm a little anxious about baby," and, not caring to say more, went from the room.

In one of the corridors she met Harley. The tears were streaming down her cheeks now, and her hands were convulsively clasped together.

In spite of his suspicions, in spite of all that had been strange in her recent conduct, he was moved at sight of her anguish.

"Zenobia! what has happened! What has made you unhappy?"

Ah! the mute pleading in her eyes; surely he was blind not to see that she loved him with all her soul!

She went to him and laid her head upon his breast, clasped her hands about his neck, sobbing like a child.

"Harley! Harley! My heart is very heavy! Oh! why have you so changed to me?"

He drew her into the nearest room, and, forcing her into a chair, stood before her, looking down at her with haggard, anguished eyes.

"Can you ask me such a question! Do you not know why we have drifted apart? Oh, Zenobia! my love! my wife! have you dealt loyally by me! Am I to blame for this estrangement?"

She was sobbing very wildly now; and, kneeling by her, he took her slender hands in his.

"Wife, are you regretting the step you took four years ago? Have you found at last you do not love me!—that you long for your old life, the old ways?" and he waited her answer anxiously.

"No! no! no! How can you even imagine such things! You are my husband, and I cannot tell how dear I hold you! Oh, Harley! for our child's sake, you should have been assured of my love!"

"How can I," moodily, "when all things seem to contradict such an idea! You are hiding something from me; you are not treating me fairly. For our child's sake (since that is the plea you use) be more explicit in speech and ways."

Her whole soul rose within her at his words, crying on her to tell all the simple truth, but the remembrance of her promise of secrecy to Beltrame held her silent. Until he gave her permission to speak, her code of honour forbade her to do so.

Harley still knelt beside her, his passionate face raised to hers, his eyes, full of mingled love and doubt, looking into hers.

"Have you nothing to tell me?" he pleaded sorrowfully,—"nothing to confess, Zenobia?"

"No!" she answered, in a low, pained voice, "there is nothing I can tell!"

He rose at once; and all the love gone from his eyes, his face set and stern.

"Very well. You, of course, know best what line of conduct to follow; but you must not grieve me too far. At least spare the honour of my ancient name!"

He turned to leave the room, but she ran to him, and held him fast.

"Listen to me a moment—only a moment! Ah, you shall hear me! I am your loyal and loving wife. I would die for you if so I could

serve you! But you have asked me questions I cannot answer without a breach of honour! Wait, oh! wait a little while, and I shall be able to explain all. I love you, I love you—and you must at least accord me justice. I am innocent until I am proved guilty!"

He put aside the clinging hands, was deaf to the pleading voice, blind to her bitter tears.

"You are too profuse with protestations. You ask me to confide in you too implicitly. Until you can satisfactorily explain your recent conduct, your evident depression, I shall be glad to see as little as possible of you!"

Just a moment she stood silent, regarding him with strange eyes, then she said in a heartbroken way,—

"It must be as you will. But, if I chose, could I not retaliate? Who is your daily companion? Who has prejudiced you against me? Not Verena! Who has stolen your heart from me?"

"Leave Miss Fairholm's name out of the conversation!" he interrupted, haughtily, "she is above suspicion. And because you are faithless, would you make me appear the same? Zmobia, I have loved, and still love you, but I can no longer esteem you; until you have explained all, we are far better apart!"

She answered nothing, her face was bowed in her hands, her sobs shook her whole frame. Harley paused at the door, and looked at her with stern, accusing eyes.

"When you obey my wish I shall be glad to see you in the study."

He passed out and she was left alone. Heaven only knows the misery she suffered then.

"He believes the worst of me," she thought bitterly, "but he defends her." And then she thought of all his past goodness, of the sacrifice he had not hesitated to make for her sake, and sobbed. "Heaven forgive me! He loved me then, and it is my own fault that he doubts me; but, oh, husband! oh, my husband! if you could but trust me!"

The chill bright day wore on, and still she sat alone. No one disturbed her; no friendly voice broke the almost awful silence of the room. Suddenly she thought of her child, and, dashing away her tears, hurried to the nursery, only to find it vacant! Alarmed, she scarcely knew why, she ran on to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Valence was sitting.

"Oh!" she gasped, rather than said, "tell me where Matthews and Percy are!"

Mrs. Valence looked up with well-bred surprise.

"Do you not know? They left here three hours ago; but as Harley has not chosen to inform you of their movements, I certainly shall not!"

The unhappy wife and mother forgot all but her fears for her darling. She flung herself on her knees before the haughty woman.

"You are a mother yourself, pity me! Oh! I have not deserved that my child should be taken from me! I pray you tell me where I may find him. I entreat you, by your womanhood, to show me that mercy you would scarcely deny to the meanest wretch upon the street. Mother, if indeed I may call you so, give me back my baby!"

"You have proved yourself totally unfit to train him; you have shown yourself unworthy your position, unworthy the love and wealth lavished upon you! You worked out your own misery; now you must bear it as best you can!"

She loosed the clinging hands, glanced contemptuously at the almost prostrate figure, then drawing her skirts about her to avoid contact with the unhappy wife, she rose and left her alone as Harley had done before.

How long she lay there she could not tell! It was useless to search for her child where Harley had securely hidden him. And now, indeed, all promises made to Beltrame must be set aside. Her first duty lay to her husband! He had ceased to love her (so she reasoned), but perhaps when he knew the truth, and how blameless she was, his heart would relent to her; at least, he would give her back her little one.

She was quick to resolve and to do, and when she heard Harley's step along the hall she rose

and stood up, waiting for his coming. He would have passed the room, but she called him, softly, and when he entered said, in a tenderly, reproachful tone,—

"Why have you done this thing! Do you so despise and distrust me you will not leave me my baby!"

"When you have explained all the mystery of the past few days satisfactorily he shall be restored to you. Until then I do not consider you a fit guardian for him."

She never quailed under his stern regard; she never flushed with conscious guilt.

"Just now," she said, gently, "you are blinded by your jealousy, and I am less than nothing to you. It was not always so; but perhaps I deserve you should esteem me lightly since I have had a secret from you. Now I will confess all. I cannot endure the anguish of these last few days."

"You would make a bargain with me!" he asked, scornfully. "You would tell your story to win back your child."

"I make no bargain," sadly. "I but do my duty. Listen, it is such a short and simple story, when you have heard it you will wonder you so misjudged me."

He listened whilst she told of Meg's visit; her fears for him, her meetings with Beltrame; and all his heart cried out to him to believe her. But reason prevailed, and when she had ended, he said, slowly,—

"Will you promise me to meet your cousin no more; to carefully abstain from frequenting the wood, or any of the by-ways leading to it?"

She flushed hotly, and answered with some degree of scorn,—

"I promise."

"If you keep faith with me I will restore our child to you at an early date; if you fail to do so I must arrange matters for our mutual convenience."

She had grown very white again, and her eyes looked darker by contrast with her pallid cheeks. A moment her lips quivered, and her breath came gaspingly; then she was calm and proud as any Roman matron in the palmiest days of the world-renowned city.

"It must be as you will," she said, very lowly. "but take care you do not drive me too far. You must not forget your wife is a Roman lady."

"There is small fear of my doing so. I wish I could."

"Ah! you regret the step you took four years ago. You would marry Verena if your chance could but return," she said, very bitterly.

"She at least would care for my name, my honour."

"You have said enough; go, before I am tempted to speech I might one day regret."

She pointed to the door with a gesture worthy a queen, and stood in stately fashion until he had obeyed her; then she flung herself prone upon the floor and sobbed like a mad woman.

"Husband and child alike lost to me! Oh, great Heaven! how shall I bear it!"

She lifted her head and looked up to the serene, pitiless sky, changing fast from sea-green to purple and grey.

The merry laughter of servants below was wafted towards her, and seemed to mock at her misery. Verena's voice rang out on the clear, chill air, in the words and notes of a song she loved.

"Alas!" she writhed in her lonely anguish, and rocked herself to and fro.

The song had ceased now, and she wondered vaguely why no one sought her.

By this time dinner must be ended. Verena had been singing in the drawing-room, and Zmobia pictured Harley leaning over her, love in his eyes, love in the low notes of his voice.

A tap at the door roused her. She started to her feet, and confronted her own maid, feeling glad that the darkness hid her tear-disfigured face from the girl's curious eye.

"What is it?" she asked, steadily.

"If you please, ma'am, shall I serve your dinner here? You have eaten nothing to-day!"

"I shall do very well, thank you, Fanny. Where is Mr. Valence?"

"In the library now, ma'am!"

"Will you ask him to excuse me to night. My head aches too badly for me to come down; and, Fanny, I shall not require you any more this evening!"

The maid disappeared, and once more she was alone; and she sat at her window watching, thinking bitterly of her lost child and her faithless (!) husband.

Presently she saw a woman's figure gliding across the level lawn—a figure so like her own, and clad in such similar garments, that she drew a sharp breath, and, remembering the superstitions of her early days, wondered if, indeed, she were looking upon her wrath.

But now another figure issued from the house—her husband's; and he was evidently pursuing the woman.

Zmobia flung out her hands wildly.

"Heaven help me! It is Verena, and he has gone to hold tryst with her. Oh, my baby, my little innocent baby! must we both suffer shipwreck because of her!"

The events of the past weeks had told mightily upon her, and for the first time in her life she swooned.

Meanwhile the woman's figure glided towards the wood; she was enveloped in a large cloak, the hood of which entirely covered her hair and sheltered her face.

She held on her way firmly, despite all obstructions, and scarcely seemed to heed the brambles which plucked at her skirts, and scratched her bare jewelled hands.

Panting with rage, Harley followed her, determined to see the end of her quest.

"Heavens! She has deceived me all along! She never meant to keep her promise. Oh, wife, wife, I wish we lay dead together!"

The moon was high in the heavens now and as he neared an open space he saw a man waiting. It was Beltrame Lee. The woman joined him.

"Quick! quick! Take me to some place of safety. He is following fast, and is furious!" She gave her hand to the gipsy, who dragged her ruthlessly through brambles and bracken.

## CHAPTER VI.

"His tongue could frame no prayer but this—  
Forgive me, dear!"

"FASTER! faster!" she said, breathlessly, "or we lose at the last moment."

Beltrame drew her behind a thick clump of bushes and trees.

"Lie down!" he whispered, "as our only chance."

And without a word she obeyed him.

As they laid there they heard Harley's step crashing through the brambles. They heard his deep-drawn breath, and saw his figure pass hurriedly. Then there came a dull thud, followed by a groan, and all was still.

"Stay here," whispered Beltrame; "he's had a nasty fall. I'll go and see if he's sensible."

And he hurried away until he came to a motionless figure lying face downwards, with arms widespread. He turned him gently over, and calmly proceeded to rifle his pockets, and, having done this in a masterly fashion, he returned leisurely to his companion.

"You can come now, Miss Fairholm; he don't know nothing now."

"Is he dead?" she added, in an awe-struck voice, and with stiff, pallid lips.

"No; he's worth twenty dead 'uns yet. But what am I to do with him?"

"I don't know; I must have time to think. No, I'll not come with you. He might revive. Leave him where he is, and I'll contrive to send some one in search of him. Now for your reward. I did not forget it, and so long as you live, Beltrame Lee, you will have a staunch friend in me."

He grinned cunningly, knowing well she dared not disregard any claim he might choose to make on her; and clutching at the purse she tendered him, said,—

"You'd better hide home quickly; it's a frosty night and he's got an ugly wound. Between

frost and bleedin' he'll be dead afore the mornin' if no one comes after him."

"He shall not die; I won't have murder on my conscience. Good-night, Beltrame!"

"Good-night to you, ledgy!" And then as she turned abruptly from him, he muttered,—

"But you ain't seen the last o' me yet. You'll be sorry one day you ever know me."

Verena hurried towards Valence Rest, afraid lest her absence should be noticed and commented upon, and not a little disturbed in her mind concerning Harley. If indeed he were seriously injured, of what use would be all her scheming! She would have put herself into Beltrame's power for a mere shadow. She had paid him liberally, and had humbled her pride not a little in consenting to meet him on terms of equality.

"Bah!" she thought, "how lucky it was he did not overtake us; another moment and he would have discovered all; his fall was quite providential."

She reached her room unobserved, and, laying aside her wraps, smoothed her hair, changed her dress, and went downstairs.

"I have been gone a long while," she said to Mrs. Valence; "but I have been searching for that old copy of *Curvante*; and I regret to say my search was fruitless. I declare I am quite frozen," and she advanced to the fire, ostensibly to warm her hands.

Mrs. Valence cried out sharply, "What have you done to yourself! Your hands are all bleeding and torn, Verena."

She flushed, but laughed lightly. "I went upstairs without a light, and mistaking my bearings came foul of some nails—that is all."

But Mrs. Valence did not seem satisfied, and the two women sat together in an almost utter silence until eleven o'clock struck from the old tower. Then the mother roused herself.

"Dear me! where can Harley be! He told me a long while since he was going out—but he is unusually late. He is finding home not so pleasant as it used to be, and I was no false prophet when I told him he would live to regret his marriage."

(Continued on page 616)

## BROWN EYES AND BLUE.

—O—

### CHAPTER X.

"When you speak sweet, I'd have you do it over;  
When you sing, I'd have you buy and sell so."

SIX o'clock slowly striking from Marling church tower clock is borne to us over the summer air, and brings us back from the dream of love to the prosaic commonplace of one's daily life.

"Can it be six already!" I say, rousing myself from the silence of bliss which had encircled us for the last minute or two.

There comes a time when love can say no more, and falls back on silence to enforce its charm, and no doubt this has been our case. However, six o'clock means that I must hurry home to Gable End.

How different a Cella to the one that set out heavy-hearted only two hours back! Two short—ah, too short—hours have worked a marvellous change in destiny. How time is laden with unknown joy or sorrow, weal or woe, happiness or misery! Strange, inexplicable time, with his hoary head and ominous sickle, what does he not bring in his hands to weary folk mortals, and how very little we ever thank him for what he brings!

"Yes, dearest! It's absolutely six, so Marling clock tells us, and I've found it generally a steady old timekeeper to be relied on, which is more than one can say of the rectory clocks. Mr. Barlow always seems to forget to wind them up, and they run down as if they were indulging in an epileptic fit, now and then, as a small amusement for leisure hours."

"Well, I must go," I say with a sigh, for the present is very sweet, and I am loth to slide back into everyday existence, as it were. "Lella and

Michael will be back from Bury market by this time, I should think, and they will be waiting tea."

"And I must go too, my Cella, or Miss Hannah will be trotting to see what I am after. Not that I should mind that one atom, she is such a thoroughly dear old soul, so unlike the usual meddling old woman of the period. It's a blessing to know a dear ancient lady like her."

I agree most heartily with Collin in his encomiums.

"I wonder what she'll say when she hears that we have made up our minds to the marriage state!" he inquires, picking up my hat off the grass, where he flung it some time back, and giving it to me to put on.

"I also forwardly wonder what aunt and Michael and Lella will say too, as I put my hat on, but I keep this marvelling to myself. I have a shrewd suspicion that they will not manifest that delight which one might naturally expect on such an occasion. However, I cannot possibly help that."

"I am sure she will be very glad, indeed," I say, as I recall how urgently Miss Hannah advised me to go and ask Collin to swing me after I had refused to do so, and how, from the very first, she was desirous of our being good friends. Perhaps she even wished us to be lovers. If so, we need have no fear of her disapproval, at any rate.

"Now, mademoiselle, how about that sixpence!" he says, directing my attention to the forlorn-looking little coin lying against the tree root, a silent spectator of our love-making—part cause and effect of it, indeed, and to which I should be eternally grateful. "Are you going to leave it there in solitary state, or what?"

"Oh! my darling little sixpence!" I cry, pouncing on it, and raising it from mother earth. "Of course I would not leave it there on any consideration whatever. It's my talisman; I'll have a hole bored through it and wear it as an amulet, a charm against evil spirits, male and female. The treasures of Monte Cristo would not compensate me for my dear little sixpence now," I end, jokingly, for my tearful mood has passed, and my spirits feel as light and joyous as winged angels fresh from Heaven.

"I believe you love that sixpence more than you do me," he urges, with pretence of reproach in his tone. "I don't think I shall allow you to have it, lest you should get too fond of money. Your lover is not a man of wealth, remember, so you must not become a mercenary little girl; that would never do."

"There's no fear of my becoming mercenary, but I must keep my sixpence; it is mine. You know I earned it!" I return, gleefully.

"I'll tell you what we will do with it. It shall be a talisman for both of us. I'll get it cut in half, with a hole bored through each piece, one for you and one for me, to remind us of each other, not that it ought to be necessary; still it will be a link between us two when we're apart. What say you to my plan, little daisies!"

"I like it. Have it done at once, will you?" tendering him the coin; "because I don't want to be without my amulet, remember; and now I must go, Collin." I end, uttering his name rather timidly, though I used to say it bravely enough to myself, not so very long back either.

"Come, then, I'll go your way to-day, though it's a long way round. Now I've got you, you perverse, small thing, I can't bear to let you go again; I shall go and see the father this evening; the sooner the better, then you'll quite belong to me—not even the shadow of cousin Michael between us. Come."

And taking my palm in his we saunter over the meadows, away from the running river, the gnarled old hawthorn, who can add one more story to its long list of many years come and gone before; linger hand-in-hand, heedless of anything in this wide, wide world but ourselves and our love, so truly selfish is the winged god Eros.

We are close upon Gable End, when round the corner of the road comes the quickly trotting mare and dogcart, with Michael and Lella side by side, facing full upon us.

It is a hedge-rowed, tree-lined road, and so the sound was deadened to our unmindful ears, wrapt in our own conversation. My first instinct is to pull my hand from Collin's, not for one moment because I feel I am caught in any wrong doing, simply the first overt act consequent on surprise; but he tightens his grasp on it, holding it firmly in his. He, at any rate, has no mind to conceal our lover-like attitude. Why should he? The fact will soon be patent enough to all eyes; it is only forestalling events a little.

Michael, driving so fast that he is almost on us ere we any of us know it, reins in the mare at once, stopping beside us, and it is not until then—not until both he and Lella have had ample opportunity of observing that we have been hand in hand—that Collin releases my palm from his strong clasp.

Looking up at the two in the dogcart I know by their faces they have seen and in a measure understand the meaning. If ever features told tales, theirs do now. Michael's is ashen, and his eyes stare at me as if they would burn me up with inquiry, while Lella's mouth writhes in her endeavours to smile pleasantly, and look unconsciously amiably at Collin, as she says to him with forced expression,—

"Why, I thought you were going to Norwich to-day with Mr. and Miss Barlow!"

"So I originally intended; but you see I have changed my mind," he returns, with the faintest shade of provoking intent in his voice. "I'm glad I did not go; it would have been fearfully hot in dusty streets, and I have spent my time much more profitably," with a short laugh.

Michael absolutely glares at him as he says this, still with that pallor through his sunburnt face. I believe if he could run his bay mare over Collin, and annihilate him where he stands, he would with all the pleasure in life. However, he only flicks his whip, making the mare start, though he holds her well in, for Michael is a capital whip, and can manage horseflesh with the best of them.

"Have you and Cella been fishing?" inquires Lella, with obvious effort.

"No, not fishing," says Collin, turning his smiling brown eyes on me, by his side.

"Of course not. How stupid of me to ask, though, you haven't any rods and things. How did you amuse yourselves for a whole afternoon? Arguing, or discussing the political economy of the country?" and she darts a glance at me, as if she expected me to duly catalogue our doings from the moment of her departure until the present time for her special behoof and benefit.

However, I leave the onus of answering on Collin, who returns lightly,—

"No, Cella," pointedly marking my Christian name for Michael and her joint edification—"and I neither spent our afternoon in argument or comment on our country's political outlook; still we managed to amuse ourselves fairly well, I think. Didn't we?" to me.

I nod and say "Yes." Then Michael puts in his word for the first time since our *rencontre*.

"We must not keep the mare standing any longer, Lella, she's so hot; but if you'd like to get out and walk with Cella and Mr. Boughton up to the house, I'll take her round to the stables for a rub down at once."

"Oh! no, Michael, thank you," she answers sweetly, and the lips writhes in another strained smile. "I won't get out, now we're so close home; I'd rather remain where I am. Besides," with a rather spiteful intonation, and a vicious glance at me, which glides off me as water does off a duck's back, "I should feel so very *de trop*, Cella and Mr. Boughton might not want me. Oh, no, I won't get out. Are you coming in now?" to Collin. "Because, if not, I may as well say good-bye here," stretching out her little gloved hand over the side of the dog-cart.

"I'm on my way to the Rectory, Miss Neville, for that cup which cheers but not inebriates. I shall, probably, however, see you at Gable End this evening, as I am coming round to see Mr. Lancelotti."

"Then it's only *au revoir*. Don't be late, I've bought a new dust at Bury to-day, and I want you to try it over with me. We always seem to sing so well together—I mean our voices har-

monise so well," she calls out, turning her head back to say it, and waving her hand, as Michael starts the mare on her way, trying to keep up at least the semblance of a tender *entente* between Collin and herself, as if something beyond ordinary friendship's link bound them together.

Collin gives vent to a short laugh as the mare hurries onward, urged by the flick of Michael's whip.

"I think they both see how the land lays," he says, with a gleam of enjoyment in his brown eyes. "Why did you want to snatch your hand away like that, you little, naughty thing? Are you afraid of Cousin Michael and Lella Neville? You needn't be. I won't let you be bullied, be sure of that. Black looks won't break any bones, that's one comfort. We can manage to support that, I rather fancy; and they can't prevent us loving one another, can they?"

"No," I answer, slowly, but I think how nearly Lella kept us apart, and but for that little silver talisman we might still have been playing at cross-purposes, and quite estranged. Then I add, gravely, "I could not help loving you, Collin, even if I tried hard not to do so. I did try several days, but I found it was no use whatever. I was obliged to love you whether I liked it or not."

"But you did like," he says gaily, "and so we are going to be very happy for the future—so happy, dearest. If the father says yes! I may have his sweet little daughter, why, there will not be one dark spot on our horizon, one gloomy thought to mar our love. No one can possibly harm us," and he takes my hand in his.

"Indeed, I trust not, Collin. I pray not, with all my heart," I answer, earnestly.

"Well, good-bye for the next hour or so. Lella asked me not to be late, didn't she?"—smiling—"so I won't. I have to 'charter' that dunt with her, too, unless she declines my manly baritone this evening, when the time comes. I am afraid, my dearest little Collin, you have made an enemy of your friend to-day, and for that matter so have I. I am heartily sorry for your cousin, I must confess, but Miss Neville's ire we can both live and flourish under. *A rividerci anima mia!*" and kissing the hand he holds in his moves away quickly down the Marling road, while I leisurely wind my way up the long path to the portals of my ancient home.

Now that Collin has left me, my hitherto thorough sense of security deserts me. Whilst he was within sight and sound I felt no atom of fear what "man could do unto me." But now the touch of his hand is gone, the sight of his brown eyes no longer near, I feel a fluttering sensation of troublous doubt as to how my news will be received. I know father will be all we could wish. He never crossed me in anything in my life, and I have so set my heart on Collin. But supposing, only suppose for one moment, if aunt and Michael shall so work upon him as to make him think it is for my good Collin and I should say good-bye to each other. Oh! I can't and won't think anything so horrible.

The house is very quiet as I enter it. The old oaken, brass-studded door always stands open, except when winter's chill blasts and feathery snow storms come whirling about our old home. Only a stained glass awing-door keeps barricade against odd-comers, and shuts away the sight of the garden from the big, marble-floored hall, remnant of the days when doubtless Gable End received finer company than it does now.

I push through and pass down the hall, preparatory to going into father's sanctum to tell him my love story, and prepare him for Collin's visit by-and-by, when a purring voice that I know no well calls out softly as I pass the dining-room door, which is half-open,—

"Collin! precious child! is that you?"

"Yes, aunt. Do you want anything?" and I poke my head into the room, discovering aunt alone on the sofa, braiding a tea-cosy assiduously, with a heap of silks lying by her side.

"I thought it must be you, sweet! You are just in time to give me some advice as to which coloured silk I ought to use for this poppy I am outlining."

I walk forward to the sofa, knowing perfectly well, as I do so, that aunt is already in possession

of the fact noticeable to Michael and Lella on our sudden meeting in the Marling-road, close to Gable End just now. Who her informant was, however, I cannot yet determine. That she knows it is a moral certainty in my mind; hence her demand for my advice on the subject of poppy red.

"Lella is a much better judge of crowd-working than I am, aunt," I say, taking up the bright bundle of parti-coloured embroidery silk; "she could tell you in a moment what shade you ought to use. Why don't you ask her?"

"Lella has excellent taste, I own, but so has my sweet Collin," nodding her head approvingly in my direction; "and Lella is upstairs in her room, dressing for tea. She and Michael have come back from Bury market, and she tells me, sweet pet, that when they turned round the Marling-corner, and came upon you suddenly, you were actually walking along hand-in-hand with Mr. Boughton. I trust she was mistaken," carefully sorting out some faded green silk wrapped up in papers, neatness personified.

Ah! so it was Lella who told Aunt Rachel, was it.

"No, aunt, she was not mistaken," I aver, outpokenly.

"Oh! my own pet! I am very, very sorry indeed to hear you say that," she goes on, smoothly, but I know that the dove is preparing its steel-tipped wings to flap in my face, despite the "own pet," and soft purr.

"You must remember you are no longer a wayward child, but almost a woman now, and it is not decorous to let a young man take your hand like that. Of course"—hastily seeing my intention of interruption—"precious love! I know you meant no harm, not in the slightest degree, and it was only a little idle fun on your part. Mr. Boughton, I am afraid, is an unsufferable flirt, so Lella tells me; and she knows, having met him before. You, or rather we, have known him so short a time, that he is really almost a stranger to us; if not quite."

"No, Collin, sweet, I cannot allow you to be drawn into any silly, idle flirtation. It is not fair to my Michael."

And her tone insensibly hardens towards the close of her sentence. I have an idea that she does not imagine it has gone so far between Collin and myself as it really has, only the budding promise of a love affair, which will ripen if allowed to remain unplucked. Hence she fondly believes she is effectually putting a spoke into our joint wheel, and nipping all incipient passion in the bud.

She has hitherto been so completely successful in keeping us apart, aided and abetted by Lella, that I experience quite a horrid pleasure in undeciphering her.

"I am going to marry Collin Boughton," I say bluntly, not softening the blow in the smallest degree, and watching aunt's face as I say it. It does not often happen to fall into my power to be able to checkmate my purring relative. Reprieves in any small form is always denied me, because aunt is always so very wary in her moves, so that it would not be in human nature to deny myself this horrid pleasureableness, which I own to feeling at this precise moment; "that is why we were walking hand-in-hand. I can take my future husband's hand without any undue indecorum, I am thankful to say."

Aunt's thin lips are a mere line as I convey this intelligence—a narrow line of acidity; and those eyes have their steeliest brilliancy as they gaze at me, standing by the sofa. For a moment I know she dares not speak, lest her tongue should refuse to purr, and obstinately pour forth torrents of invective against me and poor harmless Collin.

"Marry him!" she almost snarls out, like a cat preparing for the fray, forgetting in this supreme moment to "precious" or "own pet" or "sweet love" me; "why he has not got a penny to bless himself with."

"But I have, you see, aunt," I return somewhat cruelly, for I know aunt has had her grey eyes on all my mother's money, which father holds in trust for me until he dies; then it is mine. She had planned it all so nicely for Michael and I—how he would eventually be master of Gable

End, and she would virtually be mistress; and I—well, I should be probably a nonentity. Prue always said it, ending invariably with her sage advice, "Don't you hav him, Miss Collin," meaning Michael. "Or rather I shall have," I amend after a pause, during which aunt is fluttering her steel wings preparatory to an onslaught. "Besides, Collin has his pay. We shall not be so very badly off, and I am not an extravagant girl!"

"No doubt your lover is fully aware that you are an heiress on a small scale—probably had your mother's will examined at Doctors' Commons before he found out he desired you for a wife," she remarks sarcastically. "I trust my dear brother-in-law may see the necessity of preserving you from any fortune-hunter's clutch"—with grim composure.

"At any rate, whoever's clutch I fall into it won't be Michael's, aunt," I affirm forcibly, beating a hasty retreat from the dining-room, and moving across the hall to father's sanctum, where I know he is to be found, probably pouring over some vellum-bound illuminated missal, or cataloguing his cameos, leaving aunt to chew the cud of my final reflection as she best may. I see pretty plainly that she at least finds my news not according to her liking. I wonder whether I shall ever be "precious" or "own pet" again! And oh! I do wonder what Michael will say! Poor Michael! I know what love is now, and can sympathise. I told him once I had no heart. It is not true. I have one, but it beats alone for Collin. "Oh, Heaven!" I cry to myself fervently, "let nothing come between me and my love, I pray you." Then I knocked at my father's door.

Half an hour afterwards I rush upstairs in frantic haste to don my evening garments for tea, which is later to-night, having been put off until seven, on account of the journey to Bury. Prue stands by the window, waiting for my advent.

I dance up to her, and fling my arms round her dear old fat neck, in its cotton frill.

"I am going to be married, Prue! What do you say to that?" I cry, gleefully.

"Lawk-a-mas, dearie! now yew don't say so," she returns, doubtful as to whether I really mean it or not, for I have hitherto always strenuously scouted the bare idea of marriage; that is, with Michael.

"Yes! I am going to marry Collin; Mr. Boughton, you know"—explanatory. "Oh! but he is such a darling, and I do love him so very, very much;" and I gave her a hug as if she were Collin himself.

"Lawk-a-me!" she says again, in astonishment, when she gets time to breathe.

Lawk-a-me is Prue's favourite expression, employed on every available occasion, and expressive of varied emotions—spoken joyfully, sorrowfully, diamally, and sometimes, but rarely, grudgingly. On this occasion it conveys pleasurable excitement.

"There now," she goes on sagely, "I always did think him a right nice young gentleman, that I did. And he'd come into the dairy so pleasant-like—"

"When I was there, Prue," I added, laughing.

"With a right kind smile, and a good-morning, Prudence; what splendid butter you do make; and its rare good butter I'll own," she ends meditatively.

"Of course it is. Everything you make is good, Prue," I say, complimentingly. "You shall be our cook, Collin's and mine, when we're married; and we'll have such dishes, and you shall make as much butter and cream for them as you like," I put in promiscuously, for one of Prue's grievances against aunt has been the stinting of the above ingredients, necessary to the perfection of Prue's concoctions in the culinary line.

"Well, I'm right glad, Miss Collin, that I am," she returns, ignoring my tempting suggestions.

"So am I so glad. I don't know what to do with myself. He's coming to-night, and he shall come out into the kitchen and see you, Prue. Then you can wish us luck, can't you?"

"Yes! dearie, I'll do that, never fear. I'm

right glad, right fair glad," she continues at intervals, *sotto voce*, during the progress of my dressing; and I perfectly agree with Prue.

## CHAPTER XL

"How now, Malvollo?"  
"Madam, you have done me wrong. Notorious wrong."

"Have I, Malvollo? No."  
"Lady, you have. You must not now deny it."

ALAS! that love while it brings so much happiness should also bring pain. I have endured much mute reproach in look, voice and gesture since the eventful evening a week back, when father came into the drawing-room with Collin, and announced him as my future husband, and his intended non-in-law; thus openly acknowledging us as affianced lovers.

I am certain that as soon as I had quitted aunt after informing her that I was going to marry Collin, as it were, with or without her permission, she had gone to Lella's room and narrated the circumstance, how garbled of course I do not know. Anyway, when we assembled at the festive tea-board later on I noticed that Lella had been indulging in a weep, for her eyes were significantly red, and I felt very sorry, because it showed she must have cared a little, at any rate, for him.

It was not a pleasant tea by any means. Aunt's lips were still a pale thin streak, and she pointedly ignored me, addressing almost all her conversation to father and Lella.

No mention, however, was made of my afternoon's amusement, and one would have imagined to hear my Aunt Rachel's flow of small talk on indifferent subjects that such a thing as annoyance and concealed wrath could never have existed under that purring exterior and feline sweetness.

Michael rarely spoke, and hardly lifted his eyes from the table-cloth. Once, being next him, I uttered some common-places, for the sake of saying something to rouse him from his apathy, but he lifted his head, and while answering me looked with such passionately reproachful eyes into mine, as if he, like ill-used Malvollo, would say, "Madam, you have done me wrong, notorious wrong," that a pain shot through my breast, and I shrank from any more speech with him. Oh! I do wish there were two Cecilia Lascelles, or that I had been born a twin, then he could have had one and Collin the other.

Father, if he noticed aught amiss, said nothing to mark his knowledge. I had confided to him the whole history of my love, and he knew Michael's attachment, though never by one word or sign had he endeavoured to balance my feeling in the matter. He wished me to choose for myself, as he had done before me, and been blessed with dear mother's heart.

However, ten at last came to an end, and very glad I was. Then we adjourned to the drawing-room, and father into his study; and I tried hard to read a book and concentrate my thoughts upon what that book was about, but failed ignominiously, being in a state of fluttering anxiety as to when Collin would come. Finally the two walked into the room, and Collin's engagement began. Her path of true love! Was it to be smooth or rough, rose-strewn or thorny, to finish well or ill, happily or sorrowfully! Ah! Are we not all in that old tyrant Time's hands, and he never tells us any of his secrets.

Aunt, Lella and Michael made a pretence of congratulation, fair enough as far as words went, but to my alert ears watchful for everything antagonistic of a hollow sound, wanting in true ring.

There was no dust, for Lella said driving quickly through the air had made her head ache, she supposed. At any rate, it did ache for some reason or another, and to sing was impossible. So the newly-purchased song lay tranquilly on the top of the piano, and we were allowed no music to soothe "the savage breast," that evening. Collin did not remain long with us; possibly aunt made him feel her lack of warmth, and the general atmosphere was not enlivening, though it was, so to speak, the feast of our betrothal.

Father and I went to the door with him, after he had bade his adieu to the rest in the drawing-room, and I've no doubt they were precious glad to be rid of him if the truth be known. Father shook his hand, and then went on to his sanctum, leaving us to say our first lovers' good-night alone.

What an easy simple thing to say is a good-night! and how long it took us, to say only the moon and ourselves saw.

"In her starry shade of dim and solitary loveliness I'd learn the language of another world."

When I go back to the drawing-room I find Lella in sole possession of the old-fashioned chintzes, oval-framed mirrors and tassel-pendant chairs, which our Lascelles ancestors have left behind them as relics of the past, and which we have never cared to deprive dear old Gable End of.

"Well," she began, as I entered, and walked up the room to the stucco-carved chimney-piece, here and there interlined with gilding, opposite which she reclined in a low chair; "have you finished saying good-night to your lover?"

There was an aggressive inflection on the last word which irritated me.

"Yes," I returned, coldly; "Collin has gone."

"Don't you think now, Celia, that you have played a very underhand part—that you are a mean girl to take him from me?" she goes on, tilting her head on one side, and surveying me with looks of unforgotten wrath.

"You are speaking falsely, Lella," I answered, with dignity. "I have never for one moment tried to wean Collin's affection from you, and you know it."

"You have," she broke out, fiercely; "he was mine; we loved each other dearly once on a time, long before you ever saw him. He was the only man I ever cared two straws about, really."

"Then, if that be so," I put in, quietly, "it was a pity you did not keep him when it was in your power to do so, instead of flirting with his elder brother. Collin has told me the whole story; and he assured of this, that whatever he may have felt once on a time, as you say, you taught him the value of your heart. I gave you and he every opportunity of renewing the love you speak of. I purposely held aloof, imagining it might be that some lovers' quarrel had separated you both, and that time might heal the sore. But he preferred to love me. I might justly reproach you, if I chose, for misleading him about Michael and I. I might, too, call that meanness, and I do not think anyone would call me far off."

"He would have come back to me," she whimpered out, "only you took care he should not. I cannot think why you want him; he isn't well off, and he won't have much when his father dies, because all that goes to his brother. Michael is your slave, adores the very ground you walk on; you might have been contented with him and left me Collin," and she dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief.

"You are speaking at random, Lella. I should never have married Michael if not a single other man lived. Will you never understand that? As to Collin's being well off, I am not particular to a few pounds per annum, more or less."

"Well," she said, regarding me evilly; "I consider you behaved shamefully all round—to Aunt Lascelles, Michael and I. I wish I had never come down to Gable End, that I do. But do not be so sure it will all be honey and roses. Miss Collin. You believe Collin is in love with you; he's in love with your money, if you like," pulling at the corner of her handkerchief.

"He bestows his affection on a very unsubstantial object, then," I answered, with a little laugh and shrug. "At present, no one, in a sense, could be poorer than I am. Father will live years and years longer, I pray to Heaven, and the gold which you assure me Collin worships, instead of my unworthy self, we could neither of us touch until my beloved father joins dear mother above," I ended, gravely.

"I don't care what you say," she went on, violently; "he was mine, and you led him away from me. But you're not married yet, and there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.

You may find your precious lover not quite such a god as you imagine, and he may tire of blue eyes and a good complexion."

"True," I assented, nonchalantly; "it may turn out so, but, in the meantime, we have not tired of each other yet. When we have found each other wearisome, and a bore, I will write and let you know. Come, Lella, do not be so foolish. I have no wish to quarrel, let us be friends," and I stretched out my hand; "you know we cannot both have Collin, can we?" But she kept sullenly twisting her handkerchief, regardless of my peace overtures.

"You are not married yet," she muttered, getting up from her chair; and, passing over the tapestry carpet to the door, she left me alone in my glory.

For a little time I lingered, wondering how it was that I appeared to be such a terrible girl—a *mauvaise sujet*, in fact—only because I loved Collin and he loved me. According to aunt and Lella I ought, properly speaking, to feel that I had committed some stupendous wrong, for which due atonement and repentance were necessary, only because I wanted to marry one man, and they wanted me to marry another. But the hardest part of that evening had yet to come. As I wended my way upstairs, and down the long corridor leading to my room, I passed Michael's door, which was ajar, and a light shining inside.

I stayed my steps, thinking I should like to say something to him ere I slept—to hear him answer that he at least bore me no grudge, no ill feeling—though, to tell you the truth, I have almost detested aunt, instinctively feeling her falseness in thought and speech. I have always liked Michael up to a certain degree; I would sooner hear his harsh voice than her smooth purr; and his love at least was sincere, though I did not want it. So I called, softly,—

"Michael, are you there?"

There was no answer. I listened, but I heard no movement to indicate a living presence in the room. Then I said again, pushing open the door farther inward, and looking in,—

"Michael, are you there?"

He was there, but he made me no answer. Sitting against a spindle-legged black oak table, his arms stretched out over it, and his head lying hidden close against them, he either did not or would not hear me. I crossed the room to his side, and, laying one hand on his outstretched arm, I said once more,—

"Michael, I have come to say good-night to you."

He slowly raised his head, as if by the mightiest effort, and looked at me. Haggard, swarthy-featured, full of indescribable misery, I shrank back. Had I done this! Was this expressed misery of my working!

"Oh! Michael, don't look at me like that!" I said, in a shocked tone.

"Why not?" he answered, harshly. "Why must I not look at you like that? Would you have me pretend I am glad that you have thrown me away like an old glove needed no longer? Am I to counterfeit contentment, joy, that you are going to marry some other man than myself? I tell you now, that you have broken my heart."

"No, no, do not say that, Michael," I exclaimed, beseechingly, "I cannot bear it. If I had ever led you to believe differently than I always have done—if I had ever allowed you to imagine I loved you, you might justly say it of me. But you know I never did. Have I not always implored you not to think of me but as a cousin, jested with you, tried to laugh or provoke you out of it? Answer me truthfully, and you cannot deny it."

He fell on his knees before me, and took my hand in his.

"Celia!" he cried, raising his face full of despair to mine; "think well before you throw me away. Think well before you have a lost soul on your conscience. I know I am mad to-night, but it is the madness of my love for you. Give me your pity even, if it cannot be answering love, and take me to your heart instead of the man who would rob me of all I treasure in this world. I will be your faithful lover, your devoted slave henceforth. I swear it, as I kneel here, if you



"HAVE YOU AND CELIA BEEN FISHING?" INQUIRES LEILA, WITH OBVIOUS EFFORT.

will only give me that pity which is akin to love, and send Colin Boughton away. He cannot love you as I do. You shall never regret your choice. I am offering you my soul, remember, the soul of a man who will live for you alone. By refusing, you kill that soul for evermore. Oh I do not refuse. I implore you, entreat you, by all you hold sacred, not to refuse," clutching my hand to his breast, as if he would force me to give him a yes.

"Oh, Michael, I cannot do what you ask me," I returned, gently, full of infinite pity for his pain, for did I not know what love is myself?—and though it added sweetness to life in one case, it surely added bitterness in another, "I cannot, indeed I cannot. It is begging an impossibility. Would you have me turn traitor to my love, when you ask me to give Colin up? You tell me that you love me—would you then make me unhappy, wretched, miserable, all my life long? No, I am sure, when you think of it, you would not. If you are truly fond of me, your desire would be to see me happy. No, dear Michael, indeed I cannot do what you ask," I ended most sorrowfully.

"You kill me, remember," he said, bowing his head over my hand, and speaking in a suffocated voice; "morally, you condemn me to death—the death of hope and joy and happiness in this world. It will be one long, dreary blank of a death in life."

"Hush! oh, pray hush, Michael; you do not know what you are saying. You cannot mean it, really. It is not true," I answered, falteringly.

"It is Heaven's truth, Celia, he returned, despairingly, lifting his swart, haggard face towards mine.

The next moment someone rustled across the room to us.

"You cruel, cruel girl!" hissed aunt in a low voice of concentrated anger; glaring with her steely eyes full at me—all her polished smoothness vanished; the soft purr died—only the true snarling, feline woman alive in her now. "You wicked, miserable, cruel girl," she said again;

"Is it not enough that you must take up with the first raving, pulling, money-hunter you come across, and break my son's heart after all his years of devotion?—that you cannot leave him alone in his grief, but must needs come to gloat over his misery, and contemplate the wreck you have caused?"

I felt the utter injustice of aunt's condemnation. I certainly had not come to "gloat" over his misery, as she termed it. Far from it.

"Yes," she went on, in the same hissing tone. "Look at your work, gaze on it and be satisfied. Oh, you cruel, miserably heartless girl. Why do you kneel to her?" she said, addressing Michael.

"Do you imagine prayers or supplications will avail you? She will laugh over what you cry to her lover to-morrow, be very sure. Bah! they will both live to rue their laugh. Let them laugh while they can; time may teach them another lesson. They are not married yet," she ended, with a sudden, snarling laugh, unconsciously repeating Leila's very words, of a little earlier.

"You are wrong to speak to me like that, aunt," I said, indignantly, as Michael loosed my hand and rose to his feet.

"Wrong to let you hear the truth!" she continued, scoffingly. "Wrong to tell you of your heartlessness. Do you expect a cress for what you have done?—a kind word for throwing away my child's heart like a ball? Do you imagine I have put up with all your whims and fancies all these years for pure love of you? If you fancy this for one moment, let me tell you, you are egregiously wrong. It has been for Michael's sake, because he foolishly set his heart on you—solely and only for his sake. But, my young madam, you are not married yet," and she laughed slowly again.

"I neither deserve what you say, or is it just," I answered, quickly.

"Mother, Celia is right; you forget—yourself," put in Michael, looking fixedly at her as he spoke.

For the moment I positively felt grateful to my cousin for taking my part. I began to

think everyone but father and Colin seemed against me.

"I have nothing more to say then," said aunt, relapsing into a voice and manner of icest coldness, and moving closer to Michael's side. "You can go. I have finished. You can leave my son in peace with his mother, and be thankful he forgives you your wickedness. Though he sides with you I can pardon him, knowing his besotted dotage. Go, I say, you have broken his heart; there is nothing left for you to do now. Leave us in peace," and she deliberately turned her back on me, and began to smooth Michael's hair.

"You are very harsh, Aunt Rachel," I said, sadly, moving away to the door. There I lingered, hoping we might part better friends, for I would not feel enmity against her—for her injustice, cruel as it was, knowing that she said truly when she told me it was for Michael's sake.

"Are you not gone yet?" she asked idly, as I stood waiting. "What do you want? I told you I had nothing more to say; leave us. Good-night."

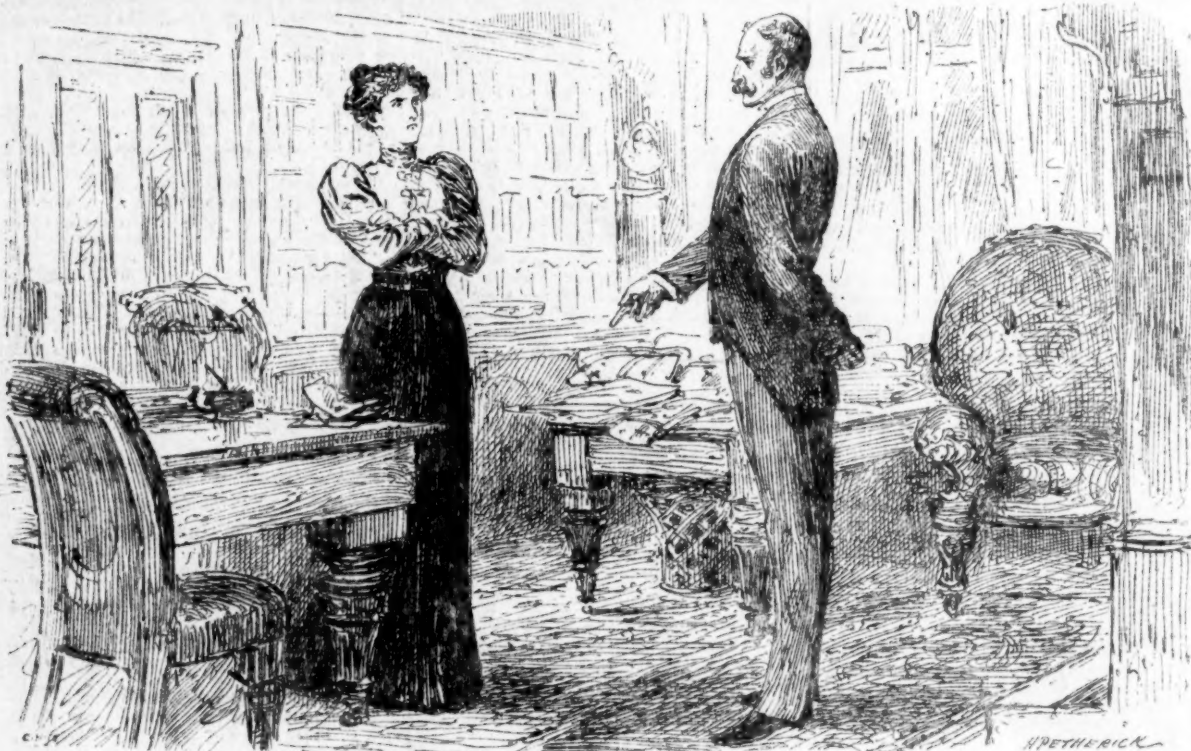
I went out, softly closing the door behind me, down the rest of the dim corridor, and so to my room.

Verily, my betrothal seemed to be set about with storms. The course of true love had not begun very smoothly, I thought, with inward dismay. But what mattered the beginning so long as the end was peace and happiness.

Oh, Fate, please, do please, make it smooth in the future, and let us be happy!

(To be continued.)

A NEW unstealable umbrella has been patented in Paris. When the umbrella is placed in the stand, you unscrew the handle and drop that into your pocket; by so doing you lock the ribs together so that the umbrella cannot be opened until the handle is screwed into its place.



"UNCLE, I TELL YOU ONCE FOR ALL THAT I DID NOT INVITE MAJOR LUSHINGTON!" SAID SIBEL.

## YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

### CHAPTER IV.

"MEET ME BY MOONLIGHT ALONE."

MAJOR LUSHINGTON was a gentleman. When he saw that Sibel Fitzgerald was frightened by the consequence of her acts, or rather what he had been taught to consider her own acts, he set her free, and allowed her to succumb on to a small wooden bench, insulating, however, on placing himself by her side, although the space was small.

"I want to go home," she gasped, clasping her hands in a state of great agitation; but her legs shook so that she doubted if she could stand.

"So you shall!" thinking it best to humour her affected trepidation; but having brought me here, the least you can do is to talk to me."

"I never brought you!"

"You never wrote this letter!" drawing one out of his pocket, with a quiet smile.

She caught it from his hand, and read it by the light of the moon. The writing was disguised in the usual style of a valentine, but large and clear, so that she could decipher it easily. The precious effusion ran thus:—

"Dear Major, with the jet-black hair,  
If for your friend you really care  
Come to the Knoll to-morrow night,  
And see if I've forgot you quite."

"Au revoir till 12 P.M.

S. F."

"And you thought I had written that!" throwing the paper contemptuously into the bushes.

"I am sure of it," was the tranquil reply. "I wish you hadn't thrown it away, because I shall have to look for it."

"Then I never did. Do you think I could be so vulgar and unladylike?" her cheeks flaming,

as she started up, in spite of his efforts to detain her.

"Nonsense, it was most kind," rising reluctantly. "I knew it was not like you to break a promise."

"I have broken it!" hurrying down the hill as fast as she could make her way through the bushes.

"Keep it as well next time, and I shan't complain. Hallo! what is this?" stooping to pick up some small objects on which a moonbeam rested, "Snowdrops and violets! Were you wearing my flowers to-night? Of course you destined them for me!" and he placed the tiny bunch in his button-hole.

One fact after another told fatally against her, and she did not know how to bring conviction to his mind. Also it was difficult to enter into explanations, whilst hurrying along at a breathless pace. When the garden-palling came in sight, and the proximity of her home gave her a welcome sense of security she stood still.

"Major Lushington, I never wrote that letter."

"May I ask who did it?" with frank incredulity in his tone.

"My Cousin Phil."

"What brought you to the Knoll?" looking down at her with an irritating smile.

"A bet with Phil."

"And these snowdrops?" pointing to those in his button-hole. "You were wearing them for his sake! Dearest"—he hesitated—"Miss Fitzgerald, don't regret the kindest action you ever did in your life, and mind you keep all your promises as well as this. Mayn't I escort you any further?"

"I can't stop to explain, but Phil shall write," she said, hurriedly. "Good-night."

He shook hands, still with that exasperating smile.

"Rather a shame—is this to be all?"

She caught away her hand and fled.

"I am going to look for your letter," he called

out after her, as he watched the small figure till it reached the gate.

"I swear it isn't mine."

But he only answered with a laugh, as he walked off towards the Knoll to begin his search. The moon was unkind enough to hide her light behind a heavy cloud by the time he had climbed to the top, and the gorse-bushes looked like so many patches of ink. He lighted a whole box full of cigar-lights in succession, and ferreted about amongst the bushes with his stick, but not a glimpse of the letter could be seen.

Though unwilling to leave it, he could not spend the night in looking for it, and at last gave it up as hopeless, trusting that the wind had hidden it from all other eyes as well as his own. When he reached Wentworth Chase he found the young guardman yawning desperately over a pile of papers.

"I thought you were lost. What have you been about?" pushing the papers away, and drawing forward a small tray with decanters and glasses.

"Pressing business," looking very complacent, as he stretched himself on the sofa, "of a pleasanter nature than yours. By Jove! I do think girls are mysteries that no fellow can make out."

"Mysteries in which I have very little interest. Have something to drink, and then I'll be off to bed," pouring out a glass of brandy-and-water, and pushing the tray towards his friend.

"Thanks; I feel infernally selfish—you sitting there over those beastly documents, whilst I've been larking about!"

"I wonder what you can find to amuse yourself with?"

"I could tell you something which would make you open your eyes," as he sipped his wine; "but of course my tongue's tied." He laughed as he stroked his moustaches. "Do you know, old fellow, I don't envy you that bride of yours. She looks as if she had a poker run down her back."

"I was not aware that I had a bride," passing

his hand wearily over his forehead. "I've something else to think of."

"Marry an heiress, and you'll be able to float. I know one or two who wouldn't be sorry to have you."

"I know one or two that I should be uncommonly sorry to have, whether they would put up with me or not," putting his papers away, and lighting his candle.

"Charming little girl—that Sibel Fitzgerald. Any money?"

"I really can't tell you!" with stern gravity. "The family estates are heavily mortgaged, and Sir Guy, her brother, is endeavouring to release them."

"Good family—pretty face, and possible fortune—not a bad spec from any point of view. 'Pon my soul, Wentworth, I've been nearer matrimony to-night than I ever was in my life."

Dudley opened his eyes wide in utter astonishment. "Where have you been?"

"At the top of that place called the Wishing Knoll," twisting his moustaches with a conscious smile.

"Rather cold work at this time of night." "Confoundingly cold at first, but—but I soon forgot it."

"You were not alone!" with a quick glance into his friend's face.

"Not exactly. 'Pon my word, I'm dying to tell you, but it wouldn't be fair. Helgho, I wish I weren't off to-morrow!"

Wentworth did not respond as cordially as he might, but went out of the room, saying he must look up for the night. As he drew the heavy bolts of the front door, his mind was very uneasy. He had overheard some chaff about Valentine's Day between Sibel and Lushington. Could the child have been mad enough to meet him at that time of night, on pretence of trying the spell together? Lushington was concealed enough to fancy every girl was in love with him; but could any girl give a greater proof of her attachment than that? Man of the world as he was, he ought to have been ashamed of himself for taking advantage of her innocence; but the girl ought to have been still more ashamed of compromising herself so disgracefully, and no amount of innocence could excuse it. Then he pulled himself up abruptly. Sibel Fitzgerald was perfectly incapable of such an escapade, and he had suffered himself to be misled by a few rambling remarks which had seemed to connect her name with the adventure.

He thought of her sweet face, as he had seen it that morning, covered with blushes, and he told himself that if Lushington swore it was true, even then he should not believe it. Poor little lonely thing! He hoped she would find a good husband some day, who would know how to take care of her. If things had gone differently he might have thought of her for himself; but a man on the brink of ruin ought to be horsewhipped if he thinks of matrimony.

Meanwhile Sibel had made her way home as fast as she could. Phil stepped forward and shut the gate behind her.

"Well, so here you are at last; you've been a precious long time about it."

"Don't speak to me," she said, passionately. "I never mean to speak to you again in the whole course of my life. I wish I were a man that I might knock you down!"

"That's civil, after keeping me shivering out in the cold!"

She said nothing, only hurried on as if she were anxious to get rid of him, and in sullen silence they reached the house. He fastened the door securely, then stopped to take off his boots, in order that his father's quick ears might not hear him creeping upstairs; whilst Sibel, without deigning to take any further notice of him, disappeared, gaining her own bedroom noiselessly on tiptoe.

She knelt down by the fire, holding her cold hands to the welcome blaze. Her heart was still beating fast with excitement and fear, and her brain seemed in a whirl. She had a vague presentiment that evil would come of the adventure. Kisses such as had scorched her cheeks must leave a stain behind; and a secret with a man of

Lushington's temper she felt instinctively would become a danger.

Phil should write to him to-morrow, for she could not rest so long as he was under the conviction that she had been bold enough to send him such a letter. That hateful Phil! She could never forgive him—never—never—never! Oh, Heavens! If Judith, the calm, superior Judith, could only guess what scandalous proceedings she had been engaged in! Would her tongue ever rest? Those cold, jeering remarks, which always stung, like so many infuriated wasps, and only made her worse instead of better, would they ever cease? One glance from Dudley Wentworth's eyes would have more effect than a thousand harsh speeches from her cousin. With him, her heart was malleable as a piece of putty; with her, it was as hard as a nether millstone.

And yet her good genius was going from her, taking with him a girl's shadowy aspirations, and the longing hopes which clung to him as a sea-anemone to its rock; and her evil one remained, dimming the brightness, exciting the passions, and making a tempest where there should be a calm. With none to watch over her, and few to love, the girl's future was full of ominous clouds; and the star of love, which should have heralded a brighter day, was more likely to foretell the advent of night. She laid down in her white bed to dream of Mr. Wentworth and Major Lushington. She thought she was standing by the altar, with Dudley by her side, when the Major came striding up the aisle with his sword clanking at his heels. "She is mine!" he called out in a voice of thunder. "I kissed her by the Wishing Well!" The church immediately collapsed, and she woke up and thought she was driving home with Lushington in an artillery waggon!

## CHAPTER V.

### "PROMISE NOT TO BETRAY ME!"

A fortnight passed, during which Combe Lodge was undisturbed by the outside world. Major Lushington left a card at the door—the day of his return to Woolwich—at such an excessively early hour, that, in spite of his usual amount of audacity he did not venture to come in; and Dudley Wentworth was too much engaged with his own and his father's affairs to leave the precincts of the Chaux. The news of the disaster which had happened to the grey-haired pair excited the compassion of the neighbourhood, although the failure of the Saratoga Mine speculation, which had caused his ruin, formed the text for many moral lectures on the gambling spirit of the age. Mr. Sanders, the rector, paid a visit of condolence, but as he began with an objectionable, "I told you so," Dudley hurried him out of the house as soon as he could, feeling certain that he would do his father more harm than good.

Sibel had failed to make up her quarrel with Phil, and never deigned to smile at his insane jokes or to take the smallest interest in his proceedings. She had forced him, much against his will, to write a letter to Major Lushington, explaining the facts of the case, and exculpating his cousin from all share in them; but, much to her surprise, this letter had never been answered. Phil told her that it was quite natural, as no man liked to be made a fool of; but she replied with a toss of her head: "A gentleman ought to have apologized for his conduct to me."

"Not if he thought you liked it. Come, old girl, I am going to some race with him to-morrow. Shall I give him your love?"

This suggestion was received with contemptuous silence, and he strolled out of the room with his hands in his pockets, whistling "La-di-da-di-do."

Sibel went on with her drawing. Judith was out driving with her mother, Rose was practising in the drawing-room, as she had the school-room all to herself. Her uncle never interfered with her there; so when she heard a step in the passage she took it for granted that it was Phil's, and did not take the trouble to look up

when the door opened. He threw himself into a chair, and began to fidget with the things on the table. Finding that his cousin took no notice of him, he burst out in an exasperated tone: "You go on as if your life depended on that beastly drawing!"

"My pleasure does, at all events," calmly, eyeing it from a different point of view.

"How you can find any pleasure in it I can't conceive."

"Just pass me the India-rubber."

Finding that he did not do it, she looked up to see the reason, and perceived for the first time that his face was as white as if from a fright.

"Good gracious, Phil! what is the matter?"

"Everything," he answered sullenly. "The governor's been taking a walk up that confounded Knoll."

"And what?" breathlessly.

"The first thing he comes across is that infernal letter. What on earth induced Lushington to be such a fool as to leave it lying about?"

"It was my fault," said Sibel, in a low voice, "I threw it away."

"You did?" in great astonishment.

"Yes he took it out of his pocket, and I snatched it from his hand," her cheeks burning.

"I wish to heavens you had had the sense to keep it."

"He wouldn't have let me."

"He would let you do anything. I say, Sibel, it does seem hard that when I tried out of good nature to bring you two together—"

"Don't talk of it," drawing her lips together.

"I knew he was spoony on you, and I meant no harm."

"You never did a worse thing in your life."

"The governor's in an awful wax, and if you split he'll stop my going to the steeplechases and everything."

These steeplechases were got up by the Royal Artillery; and Major Lushington, who had made Phil's acquaintance when he accompanied Sibel on her visit to the Hays, and was glad to be civil to him for his cousin's sake, had promised to let him drive over in the regimental drag. The boy had been looking forward to it as the most delightful dissipation possible, and he was half-mad to think he might be disappointed. Sibel had her own reasons for wishing him to go, that he might clear up all misunderstandings with the Major, but she did not wish this to be divulged, so answered calmly,—

"And if he does, you have quite deserved it."

"Belle, that's not like you. For goodness sake, don't take a leaf out of Judith's book. Don't be spiteful, there's a good girl," stretching out his thin, effeminate hand, and gripping her soft pink one. "I'm awfully fond of you, and there's nothing on earth I won't do for you, if you'll promise not to tell."

"Leave me alone," pottishly drawing her hand away, though her heart was really softening at the boy's appeal.

He got up and leant over the back of her chair.

"You know the governor's as hard as nails, and if he gets into a passion he's capable of anything. Fancy, if he stops my having a commission! you don't want me to be ruined for life! Belle, you don't want me to grind away at a desk, instead of going into the army! I couldn't stand it; I should run away and enlist in some marching regiment, and get killed as soon as I could; and, Belle, it would be all your fault, because you were so hard-hearted," rubbing his fair head, like a dog, against her soft brown locks.

"Uncle would not go so far as that, for his own sake," she said, thoughtfully.

"He would. He's up to anything when his monkey's up, with no more sense or heart than that ruler."

"Hush! Remember, he's your father. Thank Heaven! he's not mine."

"No, you've much to be thankful for," with a shake of his head; "but, look here, Belle, there's nobody likes you in the house except Rose and me. Judith hates you like poison, because she can't hold a candle to you. My

mother only tolerates you, and sighs over you—the governor can't bear you. Stick to your friend, and I'll stick to you, there's a dear girl. Just say you never wrote it, and don't split upon me."

"You deserve nothing from me."

"I know I don't," with unexpected penitence; "but I know if I got into a scrape you would cry your eyes out—a downright infernal scrape, I mean—such as would spoil my life."

"And what if I get into a scrape?" looking up at him sideways from under her heavy lashes.

"But he can't do anything to you, that's the beauty of it. If he scolds you, you can always give him as good again, and being a girl there's nothing else for him to do."

"You don't deserve it," she said again, as if trying to fortify a falling resolution.

"But you are going to do it for me. Bravo, Belle; I always said you had the best heart in the world," and he showed his gratitude by bestowing on her a cousinly kiss.

"Don't!" drawing away. "I have not forgiven you."

"You are out-and-out prettier than the whole lot of girls in the neighbourhood, and Wentworth thinks so too."

A burning blush suffused her cheeks, but she said nothing, only shook her head impatiently, when his limp fingers touched her hair.

There was a knock at the door. Priscilla, the head housemaid, came in with a very serious face. "Please, miss, master wants to see you in the library."

"Very well, I will come."

The door shut, and Sibbel looked at Phil in dismay. "I don't like it," with a nervous smile.

"I think I would rather have a tooth out."

"Keep up your pluck; you have more than any of us," he said, encouragingly.

"I wish you and Major Lushington were at the very bottom of the sea," with vindictive energy, as she rose from her chair.

"You might find it inconvenient without me," as he took up a pencil and began twisting it in his fingers.

"But after all you know," her spirits returning, "I never was afraid of him."

She brushed back her bright brown hair with her hands, and walking quickly across the room threw open the door, and ran downstairs.

She entered the library, her heart beating fast, and her courage evaporating with every step she took.

General Forrester, a man about the middle height, with a slight, trim figure, a right face burnt red by the sun, and scanty iron grey locks brushed into a tuft on either side of his narrow forehead, motioned to his niece to sit down, whilst he stood upright, as a note of exclamation on the hearthrug.

There was a writing-table in the centre of the room, with a stiff, uncompromising chair before it; another table heaped with papers and despatch boxes; a few chairs, each in its allotted place, as if marking out a pattern; book-cases lining the walls, and a likeness of his wife as a young girl with flaxen ringlets, and the regulation smile, hanging over the mantelpiece.

The General cleared his throat.

"Sibbel, I have sent for you under the most distressing circumstances. As the daughter of my poor brother Edward, it has given me pleasure to receive you under my roof. I hoped that, with my wife's help, and in the society of my daughters, you would acquire that refinement of mind and manner which is the best attribute of a lady. Ahem!"

"I hope I had it before I came," murmured Sibbel, her high spirit chafing under the implied rebuke.

"I am sorry to say," fixing her with his ferret-like eyes, "you were lamentably deficient in it; and what is more," raising his voice, "instead of improving, and making use of the advantages which have been offered you, you have steadily deteriorated. I could not have conceived it possible that a girl, the daughter of a lady, the companion of ladies, should have behaved as you have done, with an utter disregard for the common laws of decency and propriety."

"Uncle!" springing to her feet, with flashing eyes.

"Curb yourself, if you please," with a wave of his hand. "Any girl who writes a vulgar epistle like this"—pulling the unfortunate valentine out of his pocket, and looking at it as if it smelt—"is utterly lost to all sense of self-respect. Have the goodness to look at it, and tell me if ever you have seen it before!"

She cast a careless glance at it as the crumpled sheet was placed upon the table.

"Yes, I have seen it; but I never wrote it."

The General gave a start of surprise, then his lip curled.

"May I ask who did it?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Yet you admit that you have seen it before?"

"Yes, I saw it," her pretty head held high, though her heart was fluttering nervously.

"Where were you at twelve o'clock on the night of February the Fourteenth?"

"Where was I?" hesitating for the first time, as it came before her how fatally the answer must go against her, and yet it was impossible to tell a lie.

"I suppose you can recollect whether you were in bed or not?" the suspicious eyes fixed on hers with what seemed to her a gleam of malignant triumph.

"I was not in bed, uncle," breathing hard.

"I will tell you the truth. Phil betted that I wouldn't do it; so, of course, I did. I went to the top of the Knoll to drink some of the water from the Wishing Well."

"Was anyone else there besides yourself?"

"Yes," her lashes drooping on her burning cheeks—"Major Lushington."

"I knew it," snapping his jaws together like a terrier. "And this you call a ladylike proceeding—going out at midnight to keep an assignation with your lover—a man whom you have met half-a-dozen times in your life!"

"I did not go to meet him, and you have no right to say I did," her bosom heaving with suppressed passion.

"Oh! no right at all," with a sneer. "You met by accident in a place where you had appointed to meet him."

"I had no more idea that he was going to be there than you."

"Because he did not think it necessary to answer your note except in person. The Major is probably accustomed to such invitations, and knows how to treat them."

"Uncle, I tell you once for all that I did not invite him," folding her arms across her chest. "I would rather have seen you there than him."

"Much obliged. May I ask who did invite him?"

There was a pause. She had promised not to betray Phil, but she was determined, if possible, to shift the blame from her own shoulders.

A sunbeam fell across the table on to the crumpled valentine. How badly it was written, and the so-called poetry was execrable! Phil might have done it better when he chose to borrow her name to go under it.

"Look at it!" and she pointed to it disdainfully. "Does it look as if a lady had written it?"

"No lady has, and no lady would; but you did it—you, Sibella Fitzgerald, the child of an honourable man, who would disown his daughter as I now disown my niece, if he had lived to see this day. Go to your room!"

"You dare to doubt my word?" trembling with passion.

"I daren't be such a fool as to believe it."

"Then I will leave your house this day. Oh, Heaven! If Guy were only here—if I had a single man friend to stand by me—you would not have dared to insult me! It is only because I am utterly friendless—without father, mother, or any natural protector," and she burst into a tempest of sobs.

"Leave the room!" and the General pointed sternly to the door. "I take no notice of what you are saying, because at the present moment you are scarcely mistress of yourself. You can make no possible defence for your conduct, or

else I should be glad to hear it; so go to your room, and keep there till I have decided what measures it will be best to take for the future."

"I—I won't stay in the house!" making a great effort to restrain her sobs. "I would rather beg my bread in the streets."

"Then I shall follow you, and lock your door. Have the goodness to go on in front."

He opened the library door as he spoke. There was a flood of cold spring sunshine in the hall, and Rose's fresh, young voice was carolling like a bird's as Sibbel, hiding her tear-stained eyes as best she could, hurried up the stairs.

She flung herself down in a heap on the bed, bewildered, miserable, and half-dressed with passion; whilst the General turned the key in the lock, put it into his pocket, and marched back again to his sanctum.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A POOR LITTLE RUNAWAY.

THAT anyone should presume to doubt her word, however formidable the array of facts drawn up in evidence against her, had never crossed Sibbel's mind as being within the range of human possibility. Major Lushington, it is true, had seemed unwilling to believe her, but that was only pretence, because it wounded his self-love to acknowledge that he had been duped. When she promised Phil that she would never say he had written the letter, she had no idea that her uncle would fix the guilt on her in spite of her firm denial, and now even if Phil offered to confess she would not let him.

Those who chose to doubt her might. Her resolution was taken. As soon as dusk fell she would escape—out of the window, if the door were locked—stay she couldn't, and go she would. But where? Not to her friends, Colonel and Mrs. Hay, who would be delighted to receive her. No one should be able to say that she had thrown herself into Major Lushington's arms. She scrambled off the bed, and going to her chest of drawers, began to count the money in her purse. Of her quarter's allowance only seven pounds remained; but seven pounds would last a long while if she gave none of it away, and set her face resolutely against the temptations of shopping. A roll for breakfast, she knew, only cost a penny; but she did not know anything about meat—pudding was an extra only for happy people who had comfortable homes. As to lodgings, she remembered hearing of a man—and a gentleman, too—who got rooms in a respectable street for twelve shillings a-week. Now there were a great many twelve shillings in seven pounds, and if she were never very hungry she could do with very little. It would quite last out till she heard of a situation as companion to an elderly lady—the ideal situation which never appears except in novels—where the old lady is the most delightful of beings, with no cranky or fidgety ways, and a disposition to bequeath her whole fortune to the companion whom she treats like a daughter.

There was a knock at the door. It was Priscilla with a luncheon tray. Sibbel put it disdainfully away, but afterwards she was sorry, for it occurred to her if she were going to begin economical rations it would be better not to start hungry. She turned over a few things in her boxes, and put them into a bag. The rest must be left behind, to be sent after her as soon as she had found a shelter for her head.

General Forrester had not scrupled to take away her character; but he would not be likely to confiscate her goods and chattels. She fastened the pearl button at her throat. Ah! If her mother could see her now, what would she say to the man who was persecuting her child! The tears welled into her eyes; but she brushed them impatiently away. She must be strong and brave—having no one to rely on but herself.

There were sounds of sudden activity in the house, a rushing to and fro, a banging of doors, followed by the grating of wheels on the carriage-drive. She ran to the window in time to see Phil driving off in the pony-carriage. He stood up and waved his hand energetically, pointing to the

portmanteau which was on the back-seat, and making signs, which she understood to mean that he was off to Woolwich at once. Had he run away for fear lest she should betray him? Her lip curled with scorn. Looking downward from the window, she saw that Foster the gardener, who was a great friend of hers, was standing on a ladder just below her, mending a bit of the trellis-work which had detached itself from the wall. He touched his forelock respectfully, and gave her a sympathetic look, as much as to say he knew all about it, and took her side—and no mistake. She opened the window softly, and put out her head, with her finger to her lips. "When you go, leave the ladder behind you."

"That I will, miss," in a gruff whisper; "if you want anything done, a word to me will do it."

She smiled her thanks, and shut the window, only just in time, for she found Rose was speaking to her through the keyhole.

"Belle, I am so sorry for you," came in the softest tone; "but don't starve yourself, or you will make me so unhappy. Here is a little packet of chocolate I'm squeezing under the door. Stretch out your hands so that I can feel the tips of your fingers." A little affectionate scratch was all that the space allowed of.

"You had better not speak to me; uncle—General Forrester"—correcting herself—"would not like it."

"Oh! don't call him that," with a little sob, "as if we were all strangers!"

"We shall be strangers from this day forth. Rose, you've always been kind to me."

"Yes, and we all want to be. Mamma says you are to be sure to light your fire; she doesn't wish you to be cold."

"I don't care about the cold. Rose, you won't turn against me?"

"That I won't!" with fervent affection. "I know there's some dreadful mistake. I wish Pail hadn't gone."

"Why did he?"

"There was a telegram from Major Lushington. Oh! Belle, what would he say to this?"

"Now go away, dear. Bless you a thousand times!"

Tears on either side of the door fell down on the carpet, and the cousins parted, perhaps for the last time.

Sibel got up from the floor, and with a sigh walked to the mantelpiece, took a box of matches and lighted the fire. When it had burned up she took a number of old letters in her lap, and threw them in one by one. She would not leave them behind to be pried into by the General.

How slowly the time went—the dusk seemed as if it would never come. She did not dare to start till the shutters were up, or else she might be seen from the windows and ignominiously brought back. Her heart was as heavy as lead. She was going to leave the only home she had under a cloud of shame. Innocent of all evil, she had been unjustly condemned; and the man who ought to have tried to shield her from every storm had cast her from him out into the cold.

At six o'clock, Priscilla, in solemn silence, brought in her dinner an hour earlier than usual, and set the tray down on the table. Then she drew the curtains, turned down the bed, and walked out of the room, with her head as stiff as the poker. Evidently she had no sympathy with the delinquent. Sibel did not look at her, but kept her eyes on the fire so long as she was in the room. As soon as the maid was gone she rose from her seat, and devoured the mutton cutlets with keen appreciation. It was not often she went without either luncheon or five o'clock tea, and the claret, although it belonged to her enemy, had never tasted so nice before. When she had finished she felt a little better; but there was no time to think of her own sensations. The shutters were shut, the dusk had fallen, and if she wished to catch the seven o'clock train she must start at once. She went to the glass and smoothed her hair, after bathing her eyes with eau de Cologne. The little jaunty hat was soon adjusted over her brown curls, the warm cloak round her snow-white throat. Then she looked round the room, and took a silent farewell of all the pieces of

furniture—the little bed, where she had dreamt so many dreams, the book-case which held some of her favourite books, the small table on which she had delighted to gather several treasures brought from her own home. There were tears in her eyes, but she forced them back. General Forrester was probably at that moment racking his brains to find some decent method of sending her out of the house, and it would be folly to cry because she was leaving it of her own free will. She got out of the window, climbed down the ladder, and hurried with scared steps down the carriage drive, and through the gate. At the last moment she had forgotten her bag, but there was no time to go back for it. Alone, unprotected, and without a scrap of baggage, that necessary guarantee of respectability, she must make her first start in the world. Her courage was great because of her inexperience, and not knowing her danger she forgot to fear it.

The wind was cold, and, bending her head to shield her face, she went at a quick pace down the lane, looking neither to right nor left as she passed the leafless hedges, which had not yet bidden into beauty. The sky was clear, of an opal tint, with a few light clouds hovering on the horizon, and there was no mud under foot to make walking unpleasant. But though she walked with an elastic tread, that scarcely seemed to touch the ground, the heart in her breast was heavy, and the tears sprang once more to her eyes. She was wiping them away, when two horsemen came quickly round the corner and passed her. She did not look up, or guess who it was, but the next minute Dudley Wentworth pulled up, threw the reins to his groom, sprang to the ground, and ran after her.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Why!" with averted face. "I am only going to the station; I've no time to talk—good-bye!"

"George, you can take my horse home—I shall walk," he called out to the groom. Sibel persisted on her way, till he stepped in front of her, and so blocked further progress.

"What brings you out alone at this hour?" looking down earnestly into her tear-stained face.

"I am going away—I have left Coombe Lodge," her lips quivering in the effort not to cry.

"You have left it!" feeling quite bewildered. "But why this hurry? You needn't go away at this time of night because you want to change your home!"

"Let me pass. I must go on, or I shall be late!"

"Something has happened—and you are running away," he said sternly. "Tell me the truth. Is Lushington to meet you?"

"You too!" and she looked up at him with indignant reproach in her eyes, then burst into a passion of tears. That he should suspect her too seemed a drop too much, and she felt like the Queen of Sheba, when all the spirits had gone out of her.

Deeply penitent for having wounded her, he put his arm round her, and gently drew her to him.

"Darling! I didn't mean it, I know you don't care for him—but you must tell me, and I will do anything on earth to help you." No answer, only she tried to draw herself away. "Sibel, I have a right to know—I love you so!"

Her heart beat so fast that it nearly stopped her breathing. Could it be true? Oh, Heavens, could it be true? Then he bent his head till she felt his breath upon her cheek, his kiss upon her lips—a long clinging kiss such as is most often given when the parting is near.

As their lips met a distant clock chimed seven. The hour of flight had gone by, and the girl's weary head sank upon her lover's breast.

(To be continued.)

At Munich there is a hospital which is entirely supported by the sale of old steel pens and nibs collected from all parts of Germany. They are made into watch-springs, knives, and razors.

## THE GIPSY BRIDE.

(Continued from page 609.)

There was a sound of staggering steps in the hall, the sound of servants' voices in wonder and alarm; Verena's heart stood still for fear; but Mrs. Valence rose and flung the door wide. Glancing down she saw Harley, supported by two strangers, his clothes and face smeared with blood.

With a wild shriek she ran down and caught him in her arms; then she turned on the two men, "How did it happen? Where did you find him, and who are you?"

"We're gipsies, ma'am," said one; "and we found the master lyin' in the wood; he'd just sense enough to tell us who he was and ask us to bring him here. Then he kind o' swooned like;" and as he spoke he glanced curiously round.

The wish of a woman's garments broke the momentary silence, and looking up Mrs. Valence saw, not Verena but Zmobla. "I heard a noise," she began; then seeing Harley's white unconscious face, she ran forward.

"Oh, my dear, oh, my dear! speak to me." But there came no answer, and turning to the two like sinewy figures, she said, "Carry him in here, and some one go for a doctor."

She had quickly recovered her presence of mind; she did not even appear disturbed by the fact that the two men sworn to revenge the insult offered their tribe were under her own roof. With swift, deft hands she bandaged the poor wounded head, loosened his collar and outer garments, all the while speaking comfortingly to Mrs. Valence, who was sobbing wildly now.

At last the doctor arrived, and after complimenting Zmobla upon her skill and self-control, advised her what to do; and having seen his patient comfortably settled, took his leave, promising to call in the morning.

So Zmobla sat down beside Harley and watched with eyes full of love and pardon; but when Verena entered and offered to share her duties she turned on her with suppressed fierceness. "Leave the room; you are unfit to consort with honest women. Do you think I have been blind to your manoeuvres? Do you suppose I did not see you steal out of the house to-night to keep tryst with him—my husband! If you presume to enter here, I will expose you to all who know you."

"Even to Harley's hurt!" sneered the other. "Zmobla Valence, you talk like a fool! You've got to prove your words before folks will receive them for truth—and I defy you to do that. I will leave you now, but when Harley is conscious I shall certainly visit him, much as I regret to dispute your authority."

With a smile on her insolent face she rustled out of the room, and despite all that had passed that night slept the sleep of the righteous. It was almost noon when Harley recovered consciousness for awhile, and as he turned his aching head upon the pillows the first face his eyes rested upon was Zmobla's; but as she bent over him he turned from her with an expression of such scorn, a gesture so full of repulsion, that she fell back a little from him. He motioned Mrs. Valence nearer, and said, scarcely above a whisper, "Send her away, and if I die, don't let her know where our boy is!"

Then he relapsed into delirium, and Verena, stealing in, stood looking down upon him with strange inscrutable eyes. Then she spoke in a low, insolent tone,—

"You see he does not desire your presence; it irritates him to find you here; had you not best leave the nursing to Mrs. Valence and—me?"

Zmobla crossed to her. All the hot blood of her race aflame in her cheeks; she grasped her enemy by the arm, and said, in a strange tone, "I shall yet live to bring home your guilt to you; and then, what mercy will you expect?"

Verena laughed shortly. "Let go my arm, you hurt me; and remember (if you can) such savage anger is not good form."

Mrs. Valence came and stood between them. "I don't know why you two should quarrel here and now, or in what way Zenobia has offended Harley; but I do know I will have perfect quiet here so long as my son lies ill. Leave the room, both of you!"

But Zenobia was driven to bay, all her meekness had deserted her, and her soul rose in hot revolta against these two women who had marred her happiness so long.

"My place is here, Mrs. Valence; but because you are his mother, I permit you to stay. As for you Verena Fairholme, you must leave this house, and by nightfall. At last I shall prove to you that I am mistress here."

"For how long? Make the most of your authority; it will be short-lived," and, with a mocking courtesy, she swept out of the room.

That evening, she took refuge with friends, assuring them she could no longer endure the society of Harley's low-born wife; that she had only remained at Valence Rest because she afforded some comfort to "that poor deluded fellow!"

Day followed day, and still Harley lay unconscious; and in his delirious ravings Zenobia found the solution of his changed manner. Mrs. Valence regarded her with suspicion, and to all her entreaties for news of her child turned a deaf ear.

The poor young wife grew visibly paler and thinner as day succeeded day; and there was such terrible anguish in her beautiful eyes, that the servants whispered amongst themselves that the "mistress was breaking her heart, and it was grievous to see her."

In the intervals of consciousness which came to Harley she was compelled to take up her position where he could not see her, for he showed such a decided aversion to her society that even the doctor requested her to keep out of sight.

"It will be all right when he is well and strong," he urged, cheerfully; "just now his mind has not recovered its balance, and, like mad folk, he turns against those he most loves. Keep a good heart, Mrs. Valence, or I shall have you ill next."

"I have never been ill in my life," with a faint smile, and in her heart she said, "but would I could lie down now and die."

At last Harley was pronounced out of danger; and now, for the sake of appearances, he tolerated his wife's presence, although he would take nothing from her hands, and never willingly exchanged any words with her.

One day she went and stood by the bed.

"Harley, my people have left the wood."

"That is well. Did you warn them I had determined to eject them?"

She shook her head, not daring to trust her voice, and he went on, cruelly,—

"Your extreme pallor and evident misery are accounted for satisfactorily. Zenobia, I wish you had married your vagabond lover. I wish I had never seen you!"

"I wish you never had," with a little catch in her breath. "Unequal marriages are rarely happy—ours has proved no exception to the rule. But whilst you are ill and helpless I will stay by you. When you have recovered your strength I will go away, and see you no more! And, oh! when I am gone, be good to my child. He will miss me as he grows up. Oh, how he will miss me!"

A look of pain crossed his wasted face, and, seeing fit, she controlled herself by a great effort.

"I will say no more. Forgive me that I have hurt you!" and sat down with closely clasped hands to spend the night watching by him.

She was very worn and tired, and towards midnight she fell asleep in her chair.

It was but an uneasy slumber, and she was conscious, in a vague way, of all that passed. She seemed to hear whispering voices and stealthy steps, and started erect in her chair.

An almost ghostly silence reigned. Her own breath sounded unnaturally loud and deep, and every nerve was strained to its highest tension.

"I could have vowed I heard voices and steps,"

she said to herself. "I must be growing nervous." She turned her eyes upon Harley, and found he was fixedly regarding her.

"Did you want anything?" she asked, scarcely above a whisper.

"No," and his gaze wandered round the room. Scarcely knowing why she did so, she followed the direction of his glance, until her eyes rested upon a revolver beautifully mounted in silver.

"Take it away," he said. "I forgot to tell you all the barrels are loaded; in the hand of a careless person it would mean death."

She rose to obey him, when suddenly the door was flung open, and Mrs. Valence, pale and frightened, rushed in.

"Oh, Harley! Harley! there are burglars in the house! We shall all be murdered! The domestics are alarmed; they have locked themselves in. Hark! How they scream. Oh, Zenobia! hide me. I am an old woman," and, without more ado, she crept under Harley's bed, where she lay palpitating with dread.

Most certainly there were strange steps on the stairs. In vain Harley tried to leave his bed. Zenobia flew to the dressing-table, and, seizing the revolver, boldly opened the door, although Mrs. Valence entreated her in a whisper to come in and let the thieves take what they chose.

"Lock the door, dear Zenobia. As long as we escape with our lives, what matter?"

But the other stood on the landing in the full glow of the lamplight, a tall, regal figure. She looked down and saw the dusky forms of men upon the stairs; and from out their midst Beltrame's face gleamed white and revengeful. A moment her heart died within her, a moment she grew sick and faint, then her sweet, rich voice rang out clearly,—

"The first man who dares advance a step shall be shot down like a dog!"

She heard Harley groan over his impotence, and her courage rose higher. There was a momentary pause amongst the burglars, then Beltrame sprang forward.

"Stop!" cried Zenobia, "stop, or I fire!"

He was blinded with rage and thirsting for revenge, and altogether heedless of her words. She lifted the weapon, pulled the trigger, and uttered a wild cry as her cousin fell backwards with a groan. Then came profound silence; afterwards the sound of tramping feet, and she knew the gipsies were retreating, carrying Beltrame with them. Doors were opened, and the servants, grown suddenly brave, began to issue from their rooms; but Zenobia staggered to her husband's bed, there to fall fainting beside him.

In the morning detectives were at work; and following the blood marks, came at last to a tent pitched on a moor; there they found Beltrame. The gipsies had separated until the hue and cry caused by their attempted burglary had died out, and they left their wounded companion to the care of an old crone.

Beltrame Lee believed himself to be dying, and, full of remorse for the part he had played, prayed one of the detectives to take down his confession and carry it to Harley Valence.

After disclosing the plot between himself and Verena, he said,—

"If you have been fool enough to think Zenobia cared for you, I'm glad, 'cause I know I've punished you well. I've wrung your heart as you wrung mine. And if you want to know who planned all the mischief, why, 'twas Miss Verena Fairholm, 'twas her you saw with me the night you cracked your head; she had borrowed some of Zenobia's things, and in the dim light might be easily took for her."

Beltrame did not die, but three years later Zenobia read that he had been tried, convicted, and transported for highway robbery with violence. And whilst she grieved over his sin and its punishment, she could not refrain from rejoicing that at last she was free from his surveillance.

The day after his heroic conduct Harley (who, despite all, was much improved in health) called her to his bedside.

"Wife," he said, with loving penitence, "I have wronged you shamefully; and I am sorely

afraid you cannot forgive me! I know all, and cannot humble myself sufficiently——"

But she broke in,—

"Say no more! unless, indeed, you say 'I love you, wife!' and, oh, Harley! oh, my husband! give me back my child!"

Two months later they went to Mentone, where Zenobia nursed Harley back to health and strength, and never in the days that followed did a cloud cross the horizon of their happiness. Harley had learned at last the true worth of the Romanians, and would doubt her no more.

Verena married a decrepit old Spanish count, and shone at the Spanish Court as the most daring and lovely of *intriguantes*; and Mrs. Valence, now quite reconciled to her son's *infatuation*, worshipped the child and honoured the woman she once so bitterly despised.

[THE END]

## WILFUL, BUT LOVING.

—30—

### CHAPTER V.

LORD ST. CLARE turned to his cousin.

"Bee will have kept tea for us; will you come?"

With his plighted wife's little hand, resting on his arm, he entered the presence of his love—the girl who had refused to accept his sacrifice—who had bid him marry wealth and forget her, and had herself given him the example by accepting the addresses of an octogenarian marquis.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Delaval."

He meant to speak coldly, sternly, but he was not prepared for the spells of Blanche Delaval's fascinations. Her tawny hair, gleaming like red gold in the firelight, her small, jewelled hand outstretched to meet him, a dangerous tenderness lurking in her hazel eyes; she looked a creature to take men's hearts by storm.

"Miss Delaval!" and she gave a little cry of discomfiture; "surely you are not going to give me such a formal title, while I have been Blanche ever since I was that high!" and she put her hand on the back of a chair by way of measurement.

"I may have to give you a statelier soon," he said, coldly; "allow me to congratulate you on your brilliant prospects."

"Nay, it is I who have to offer my felicitations. Bee has just been telling me the news, Miss Clifford," and she turned to Dora with a pretty smile. "I hope you will allow me to be one of your bridesmaids."

Dora blushed crimson, and bent her head over her tea-cup; and the Earl came to her rescue.

"We are going to have a very quiet wedding, Blanche. I don't suppose there will be any guests at all."

"What a shame! How mean! Why, the only thing which consoled me for my expulsion from Combe was the thought I should be in time for all the festivities at Castle St. Clare; I love weddings better than anything."

"Your own will not be long, I expect. Lord Alenton will doubtless prove an impatient lover."

Dora had finished her tea and left the room. Mrs. Fane, with the dim instinct that a storm was brewing, followed her example. The two who had once been lovers were alone.

Alan was a man of honour. He had asked Dora to be his wife, and he meant to do his duty by her; but, for all that, he could not help his heart's beats quickening at the sound of Blanche Delaval's voice. She could never be his. Both of them had broken their old troth and given it to a stranger, but yet he loved her still—wildly, madly, deliriously.

"Why do you say that?" she asked him, in low, reproachful tones; "and why did you congratulate me? I don't understand you, Clare!"

"Bah! you know what I meant."

She shook her head.

"You are very unkind to me."

"It matters little. There will be plenty of fools ready to flatter the Marchioness of Alenton. Blanche, how could you sacrifice yourself to such a creature! He is old enough to be your grandfather!"

Her face cleared.

"You thought I was going to marry the marquis."

"I thought! Everyone thought so; the papers announced it as a fact."

"The papers make mistakes sometimes."

"Blanche do not torture me; is it true?"

"What difference can it make to you? Would you be sorry if it were true—poor old man!"

"Blanche, you are playing with my misery!" his tone filled with passionate devotion. "My darling, you must know whatever has separated us no one could ever take your place in my heart."

"Ah! you have not forgotten me. The report was a mistake, Alan. Lord Alenton was very kind to me, but I never promised to be his wife."

She did not say that she only refrained from promising because she discovered that the Alenton estates were entailed, and the Marquis would have left her nothing but an empty title.

"Blanche!"

"Don't look at me like that! Well, the report of your engagement is not false, I suppose?"

"No, unfortunately; I saw the rumour you speak of, and it maddened me. I thought nothing mattered, as you were lost to me."

"Well, at least, your madness has had excellent results; you could not have acted more sensibly."

"Blanche, have pity!"

"And Miss Clifford is really not so very insipid when one comes to know her; she will be a model wife—not give you a tithe of the trouble I should have brought you."

"I would risk the trouble, my own—my darling. Oh! Blanche, how could you forsake me!"

"Listen," said Miss Delaval, gravely. "We are not fitted for poverty, either of us. Can you fancy me in the kitchen superintending the dinner, and you bringing home parcels from the Co-operative Stores, and performing other feats of economy?"

No; he knew in his own heart he could not fancy it.

"It would not have been as bad as that!"

"It would, quite. You quote Lionel and Beatrice—bah! they are an exceptional case. They are visiting at someone's house half the year. No; for you and me to marry would have been ruin; and so I suppose I ought to be glad you have made a wiser choice—only one can't always be glad or sorry to order, Alan, can one?"

For all answer he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately on brow and lip. He called her by a hundred endearing names. He besought her by everything he could think of to let him tell Dora the real state of the case, and defy alike fate and fortune for his darling's sake.

But Blanche Delaval was too much of a woman of the world to allow that. She liked Alan to be her captive. She liked to know a word from her could bend the strong man to her will; but she did not want the onus of breaking off the engagement.

She had refused, days ago, to be pointed at as the woman for whom he gave up all his chance of wealth. It would be worse still to be known as the siren for whose sake he broke his pledged word, and deserted his orphan, defenceless fiancée.

She escaped from his embraces and went upstairs.

Miss Delaval's reflections as she dressed for dinner were of a cheerful nature.

"He is mine!" she cried to herself, exultantly.

"That foolish girl will never be to him what I am. He may give her his name, may make her the mother of his children, but I shall be his idol. What a simpton she must be to think a man like Alan could possibly care for her! She must know it is nothing but the money."

Poor Dora knew nothing of the sort. With her to love was to trust. Having given her love and her faith to Alan, Earl of St. Clare, it never entered into her head to doubt him. Why should he marry her unless he loved her? He paid Miss Delaval a great deal of attention; but he had been free to woo Miss Delaval, and he had not done so. Therefore, thought the innocent, girlish heart, she had no cause for fear.

Dora and her betrothed were very little thrown together in the four weeks which elapsed before the wedding. Mrs. Fane was very busy choosing a trousseau for the future Countess, and she took up a great deal of Miss Clifford's time in consequence; then, knowing so well the state of things between the betrothed pair, no one ever thought of affording them any lovers' privileges.

Dora was never alone with Alan. Their walks and rides were interrupted. The dressmakers claimed her, and so Blanche became the Earl's companion; and no one guessed how the bride's heart ached when each day that came seemed to find her further and further divided from Alan.

"It won't be so always," said the girl to herself. "In three days more we shall be married, and he will be all my own then, and no one will be able to come between us. Bee is very good and kind, but she never seems to guess how much rather I would be out with Alan than standing like a lay figure for Madame Denier and Pauline to hang silk sheets upon."

She was interrupted in her reverie. Mr. Cecil came in and took a chair beside her. With one touch of the poker the author stirred the fire into a ruddy blaze, and then he said, cheerfully,—

"You shouldn't sit alone in the dark, Miss Clifford, there's nothing so depressing."

"I did not notice it."

"Is anything the matter?"

"No. Why?"

"You seemed to have relaxed into the little nervous fellow-traveller I remember so well, instead of our bright, happy Countess of St. Clare!"

"I am not that yet!"

"Only three days more," he said, lightly. "Miss Clifford, Alan is my oldest friend; will you accept this as a wedding gift from me, and wear it sometimes for my sake?"

It was a locket of quaint Eastern manufacture, set with rare precious stones. Inexperienced as she was, Dora knew it to be of great value. She hesitated.

"You will take it for my sake," said Herbert, with a strange ring of sadness in his voice. "Do you know I had selected it as a wedding gift for the Countess of St. Clare even before I saw you!"

"But how did you know—how could you guess?"

He saw his mistake, and tried to rectify it.

"I always felt sure Alan would marry young. I have not shown you the part of the trinket you will like the best," and taking the locket from her he touched a spring, and disclosed the likeness of Lord St. Clare—proud, erect, and handsome. "There," said the author, meaningly, "you will not refuse my present now."

To his surprise she took his hand and pressed it to her lips, with the grace and unconsciousness of a child.

"Indeed, I do not know how to thank you."

"You have thanked and honoured me too much," he said, after a slight and almost imperceptible pause. "Where is Alan? I expected to find him here."

"He is out with Miss Delaval. I think they meant to go for a good long ride."

"And why are you not with them?"

"Oh! you know I cannot ride; I have never been on a horse. Alan is going to teach me as soon as he has time."

For the first time in his life Herbert Cecil felt indignant with his friend.

"What does he mean by it?" thought Cecil.

"What good can it do, his going about with Blanche Delaval like this, within three days of his wedding! He neglects this poor child as though she were a stick or a stone, while he wastes his time

over a heartless, worldly coquette. Beautiful! well, he may think her so now, but it is only in face and colouring. In a few years' time, when she has come to her maturity, Dora Clifford will be a hundred times better looking."

St. Clare himself appeared at this juncture. He went straight up to his cousin and took her hand, with a sort of careless kindness.

"Almost tired of staying indoors, Dora!"

She uttered no complaint—only asked if he had had a pleasant ride. An uneasy conscience must have given her words a point she never meant, for the Earl answered her impatiently, almost roughly; and with a reproachful look in her blue eyes—an expression of direct entreaty almost like that of some animal in pain—the girl got up softly, and drawing back the heavy velvet curtain, which in winter divided the library in two, left the room.

For some time neither of the men spoke. Herbert sat steadily looking into the fire; Alan paced wildly up and down, with the listlessness of a caged lion.

"My uncle must have been mad to make such a will!" he cried at last, plunging into his old complaint, without preface or introduction. "He deserved to have been put in an asylum!"

"I don't see it."

"Surely you are not going to turn against me?"

"I must speak when I see you in the wrong. Oh! Alan, what can come of this but misery!"

"It is his fault."

"Surely not! He had a right to do what he would with his own; and, after all, his grandchild's claim was a stronger one than yours. You had your choice; if you elected to marry your cousin you did it with your eyes open."

"No!" said Alan, with a heavy groan; "I was deceived; I believed those lying rumours, I thought Blanche was false to me."

"Is she true now?"

"Of what use is her truth, poor darling, when I am bound hand and foot in these hateful bonds! If Dora had a spark of generosity she would release me from my promise."

"Have you asked her to?"

"She must surely see."

"Poor child!" said Cecil, pityingly. "She knows nothing—sees nothing against your honour; but it is my belief, Alan, that if you were free over so it would make no difference. Miss Delaval knows the value of her own beauty, too well to bestow it upon a poor man."

"You are cruelly hard upon Blanche."

"And what are you upon some one else, Alan! When I witness your treatment of Dora Clifford I feel almost ashamed of you."

The Earl started.

"If another fellow said as much to me I'd knock him down! Bertie, old boy, it's all true; sometimes I feel ashamed of myself."

"Then why—"

"I can't help it—I am caught in the toils of a passion stronger than myself. After all, this girl is a mere child. What should she know of love! So long as she is well provided for it can't matter very much. If I make her Lady St. Clare she need never know how much I regret the step, and how utterly and entirely my heart revolts against her."

"If you could only see her with unprejudiced eyes, Alan; if you would only believe."

The Earl shrugged his shoulders.

"Mon cher, I formed my opinion of her when I saw her first, and it has never altered. She has not one good feature in her face; I shall be ashamed of her all my days. The Countesses of St. Clare have been noted for their beauty; my destined wife is a tall, awkward, underbred girl, with neither sense nor talent. Her grandfather must have had a foreboding of her deficiencies, and have guessed she would never get a husband unless he placed me in such a position that I was obliged to marry her."

There was a sound near them so like a human sob that Herbert started.

"What was that?"

"I heard nothing."

But Mr. Cecil persisted in looking; drawing back the velvet curtains he peered into the

half dark room beyond—nothing rewarded his exertions.

"I could have declared it was a human voice!" "You are getting quite nervous. You'd better go and dress for dinner, Bertie," and there was a ring of deep affection in his voice.

"You won't forsake me because of this? However much our opinions differ you'll stand my friend!"

"Always!" said the other, simply; and then the two men, who had been nearer a quarrel than ever before in all their intercourse, parted.

Dinner was at eight as usual, but Mrs. Fane, took her place at the table with rather an anxious face.

"Dora is not coming to dinner, she complains of a headache and is lying down. I hope she is not going to be ill."

Lord St. Clare muttered something that sounded like "temper" between his teeth.

"I saw her not an hour ago!" said Blanche Delaval, "and she looked all right then. I dare say it is only blues. She seems a very fanciful girl!"

No more was said.

Captain Fane thought to himself that he should be glad when his ward gave encouragement to another suitor, she persisted in saying unkind things about poor little Dora, but he could hardly put that into words.

When they reached the drawing-room, Dora was on the sofa. Never before had Beatrice seen her look so nearly pretty; excitement had lent a faint flush to her cheeks, and her evening-dress just suited her.

"Are you better?" asked Mrs. Fane, tenderly bending over her. "It will never do for you to be ill now, Dora, with the fourteenth so near!"

"Miss Clifford must recover for her wedding-day!" put in Blanche Delaval, with a clear, mocking laugh; "if only for Alan's sake!"

For Alan's sake! Those words rang in Dora's ears.

It seemed to her they were henceforward the motto of her life.

The careless siren who uttered them little guessed the sacrifice the orphan girl was already planning in her head—the renunciation she was prepared to make "for Alan's sake."

The gentlemen soon followed the ladies. Lord St. Clare, as his manner was, led Blanche Delaval to the piano—Captain Fane went up to Dora's sofa.

"You must get better soon!" he said, pleasantly. "Bee's quite anxious about you, you know!"

To his surprise the girl's eyes filled with tears. "I can never thank her—I can never thank you both for all your goodness to me," she said, gently; "but, indeed—indeed I am not ungrateful!"

Lord St. Clare came over presently to inquire for his fiancée's health.

"How did you get this headache! You were quite well when I saw you at six o'clock."

Six o'clock! Ah! how long ago it seemed, and an hour later she was lying broken-hearted on her bed!

How little time it had taken to blight her every hope and fill her with blank despair!

She raised her blue eyes to his face.

"I shall be better to-morrow, but I am very tired now. The room swims round with me. Do you think Bee would mind? May I go to bed?"

Seriously alarmed, Alan gently raised her from the sofa, and with her trembling hand on his shoulder, he half-guided, half-carried her out of the room upstairs to her own door. At the threshold he paused, a glow of fire and candle-light appeared through the open door. Very gently he released her hand.

"Good-night, Dora!"

He never forgot afterwards that she turned to him then of her own accord, and, for the first time in their brief engagement, raised her face to his in mute appeal.

Alan stooped and kissed her forehead, then she went into her room and shut the door.

"Poor child!" thought the young Earl, as he went downstairs. "Cecil was right, it is hard on

her! Ah! Dora, I am afraid it is a bad business for us both!"

And somehow, in spite of all Blanche Delaval's fascinations, he found himself thinking of that slight, delicate figure and the face which had been raised so entreatingly to his own—that face haunted him all night. If he closed his eyes he saw it in his dreams. Once it seemed to him that in a vision the Lady Evelyn Dene stood before him with indignant eyes, crying,—

"Where is my child?"

He strove to answer her—strove to convince her that Dora was safe and well; but the words would not come, and in his agony at finding himself bereft of speech, he awoke.

"Seven o'clock!" glancing at his gold watch. "What an awful night I have had! I wonder if there is anything really wrong with Dora!"

And the Earl's valet, who considered him a most indifferent lover, was astonished by an imperative ring, and orders to find Miss Clifford's maid, and ask how her mistress had passed the night.

The man soon returned, and the news he brought relieved Alan's mind.

Miss Clifford had felt much better after she was in her own room. The maid had not yet been to her, as she had requested not to be disturbed until she rang, as she hoped a good night would be her best restorative.

"Sensible girl!" thought the Earl. "I know a bad night is one's worst enemy. I am sure I feel as if I had passed the silent hours at hard work; I am quite as tired as if I had not been to bed at all."

His scruples about Dora, the dim dread which had followed her troubled dream lulled to rest, the Earl closed his eyes and fell into a tranquil sleep.

It was past ten when he again woke, and found his much-enduring valet at the door with his hot water.

"Aye, what time is it? half-past ten did you say! Why, I must have overslept myself, Simmonds."

"Yes, my lord."

Breakfast at the Castle was nominally half-past nine, so that when the Earl made his appearance at eleven it was hardly surprising that everyone had finished.

His sister rang the bell to order fresh coffee and kidneys, and then said, pleasantly,—

"You and Dora are of one mind this morning, Alan. I find she directed her maid not to call her until she rang, but I have just sent to tell her the time. She can hardly have any idea how late it is."

Enter Mrs. Fane's own Pauline, with rather a serious face. She went straight up to her mistress.

"Can I speak to you, madam?"

"Yes; what is it, Pauline?"

By a silent motion of her head the maid seemed to imply her communication was private; but Beatrice, imagining it something trivial, had no mind to leave her cosy arm-chair.

"You can speak here, Pauline; Lord St. Clare will excuse you—he is busy with his breakfast."

The maid bent down and almost whispered in the lady's ear,—

"We cannot find Miss Clifford, madam!"

"Nonsense," said Bee, sharply; "where is Agnes?"

"Agnes went up alone first, madam, and then she fetched me. There is no sign of Miss Clifford anywhere, and her bed has not been slept on."

"Alan!" came from his sister's white lips, "Alan!"

"What is it?" and the Earl started up. "What are you frightening your mistress for!" he asked the servant, indignantly.

"I only told her, my lord, that we cannot find Miss Clifford."

"Miss Clifford is in her own room."

"No, my lord; and her bed has not been slept in. Agnes thinks she must have gone away, for her walking-dress is missing, and some other things; and, please, my lord, we found this letter."

Alan seized the letter, and his sister roused herself to say,—

"You had better leave us, Pauline. I trust

you and Agnes not to let this matter reach the servant's hall."

A long—a death-like silence.

Alan read the letter through; the few wild, incoherent lines which told him his cruel words yesterday had had an unknown listener, and promised him his uncle's grandchild would trouble him no more.

There was no beginning to the note, and in many places it was blotted with tears.

"Forgive me, I could not help it, I was in the library yesterday. I had come back for a book, and I heard what passed between you and Mr. Cecil. I learned why you proposed to me. I had never guessed it—never once. I thought you loved me. I know now that from the very first I have been a hated burden in your path. I wish that I could die, that Heaven would take me from troubling you; but all I can do is to tell you that you are free—quite free. I am going away, and you will never see me any more. The lands and money my grandfather left me will be just as much yours as if I were indeed dead, and you can marry Miss Delaval. Do not try to find me. It is the only favour I shall ever ask you, to let me hide myself in peace. In my retreat I shall hear of you, and oh! I hope you will be happy, that she will love you as truly, as entirely as I do."

DORA.

"What does it mean, Alan! Has she really gone! Does the letter explain!"

"It means that I have been a scoundrel!" said Alan, from between his clenched teeth, "and that I have broken the poor child's heart. Read those lines, Bee."

And she obeyed him, the tears falling down her cheeks as she read poor Dora's adieu.

## CHAPTER VI.

In the dull, grey dawn of a February morning, a little figure might have been seen walking briskly along the broad country lane which led to the little junction of Wilmington.

She attracted little notice, the plain attire and the small leather bag in her hand were not calculated to excite attention. No one spoke to her, no one troubled her; and so, footsore and weary, the old Earl's grandchild reached the railway station, with a dull, aching pain at her heart, for her lover's infidelity, and a dim anxiety of what was to become of her.

She cared very little what her future held so that she could hide herself from Alan—so that she was beyond the sound of the bells ringing for his bridal with another; nothing mattered to her.

She never once thought of going back to Pennington—Miss Mace would have given her up to her guardians at once. No, the old red-brick house and the refuge it might have afforded her were shut against her necessity.

She stood in the little booking-office and wondered what ought to be the first stage in her journey, and then the sound of a violin fell on her ear. It was only a child, and its notes were shrill and discordant, but yet that child turned the whole current of Dora's life.

Swift as lightning there came to her the memory of her old music-master at Pennington—the kind old man who had at last given up teaching and gone to live with his son in London.

She had ever been his favourite pupil. How often he had told her she was a musician born, and if she ever meant to use her talents she had but to come to him and he would help her.

Never had she paid much attention to his words; at fourteen it had seemed impossible to her to break away from the authority of Miss Mace and adopt a new profession.

But now she was her own mistress, it mattered to no one what she did, and so she might as well find out her kind old friend and ask his aid.

She took a third-class ticket to London. While the Earl slept peacefully, his deserted betrothed was being driven onwards towards the great metropolis; and as she went she calculated her resources.

She had had no need to think of money at the Castle, and so the whole of what Miss Mace had given her remained—rather more than fifty pounds. She possessed in the leather-bag a change of clothes and a few other necessities. Every present given to her she had left behind; she brought away no link to connect her with the past, save one—the locket Herbert Cecil had presented to her only the day before, and she had told herself she had no right to it, that, in point of fact, it belonged to Blanche Delaval; but in this one matter her heart was too strong for her, she was forced to obey its bidding; and so, beneath her dress, supported by a thin gold chain, hung the costly bauble Herbert had brought from the East.

"It will be different when they are married," thought Dora to herself, "but I wrong no one by keeping it now, and the life will be less dreary to me, if I can sometimes look at his face."

It was not a long journey to London—barely two hours—and she had fortunately caught a quick train. When she reached the great metropolis, where all was so full of noise and turmoil, the girl could not help contrasting her lot with what it had been when she came there with Susan only six weeks before.

In that brief time she had lost all—home, relations, friends, provision, rank—and heart.

"I shall love him till I die!" moaned the poor girl to herself. "His image will never leave my heart, and yet I can't be sorry I met him, though through him I am a lonely wanderer, I can't regret that I knew him. Oh! Alan, best beloved! If only you are happy, what matters aught beside!"

With perceptions sharpened by anxiety poor Dora knew that her first step must be to destroy all clue to her whereabouts; that she would be traced as far as Charing Cross she never doubted.

Mr. D'Arcy lived at Camberwell—at least that was the address he had given to Dora four years ago—but the girl was afraid to take a cab to that thriving suburb; instead, she chartered a hansom and was taken to Victoria, the only other railway station she knew by name. Then she walked on and on until she felt ready to drop and was rewarded at last by meeting a tramcar which bore the magic inscription "to Camberwell Green."

It was nearly twelve o'clock; she had had no breakfast, and she felt both faint and hungry. She saw the other passengers looking at her curiously, but she never guessed that her wan face and heavy eyes attracted their scrutiny; only when she alighted at Camberwell a mist came before her eyes, and she felt as if she must fall. The conductor watched her pityingly.

"You'd best go into that shop and sit down, miss," pointing out a confectioner's; "you're not fit to stand till you've rested."

Dora was only too thankful to obey him, head and heart were alike heavy; but when a plate of hot soup was brought her, although she felt as if the sight of food tortured her, by the time she had taken a few spoonfuls she revived, the faint colour came back to her cheeks; she felt her strength returning too.

"I think I must have been hungry as well as tired," she said to the young woman who waited on her. "I feel much better now."

More soup, a glass of wine and a biscuit, and then Dora felt equal to asking for directions. Could her new acquaintance tell her where Colville-road was, and was it very far?

The young woman decided it was too far to walk, and recommended a penny tram. And Dora meekly acquiesced, musing thoughtfully on the wonderful things to be purchased for a penny in Camberwell.

Colville-road was a long, narrow turning with houses on either side, so precisely alike in size, shape and outward appearance, that Dora decided the inhabitants must have a great difficulty in discovering their own door. To the girl whose whole experience of life was divided between Pallas House and Castle St. Clare, Colville-road seemed a most unenviable spot. Groups of dirty children played about, despite the winter's cold; a sunburnt Italian played a hand-organ, and

directed the gambols of a shivering monkey. Miss Clifford shivered too, but from dejection, not cold.

"I could never live here," she thought; "it would kill me; there is hardly enough air to breathe."

But before she had reached the number so impressed upon her heavy brain, Colville-road seemed to improve, the houses grew a story higher, and developed a bay-window and a narrow strip of front garden, in which a few consumptive evergreens attempted to flourish, and No. 444 surpassed all the others in whiteness of blinds and purity of steps. These last were, indeed, so dazzling, that Dora almost feared to ascend them with her dirty boots. The hope of seeing Mr. D'Arcy's kindly face, with its quavering grey eyes and scanty hair—the prospect of a cordial greeting from the only creature in the wide world to whom she could appeal, spurred her on, and she gave a timid knock at the front door.

A little servant opened it—a girl with a shock of red hair, and an honest, freckled face. She looked at Dora with decided disapprobation.

"No; missus won't let the rooms to a lady. She wants a City gent as is out all day long." began this juvenile retainer, never doubting but that Dora had been attracted by the neat card in the window inscribed "Apartments to let."

"I do not want rooms; I want to see Mr. D'Arcy."

"The master's out; won't be in till late. Missus is at home, if you'd like to see her."

She unlocked the parlour door, and marshalled in the visitor. The look of the room struck on Dora with a chill. She had never seen anything like it before. The cold, shiny table, adorned with heavy books of the kind presented gratis with half-a-pound of tea, the cane-seated chairs, smothered in crochet antimacassars, and the little cupboards, one each side of the fireplace, set out with wine glasses. Again that feeling of oppression came to Dora. Did people really live, and move, and have their being in rooms like this? But she raised her eyes to the chimney-piece, and gave a sigh of glad relief—there, in a cheap Oxford frame, stood a portrait of her old music-master. She had made no mistake, come to no wrong house; this, evidently, was his home, and she felt certain he would befriend her.

Enter the mistress of the dwelling—a stout, bustling woman, whose face beamed with good humour. She wore a good black dress, and a lace cap with flowers in it. Mrs. D'Arcy was nearly fifty, and not in the least ashamed of her age.

She looked a little surprised when she saw her visitor. Evidently she had expected something different. Then she saw the sad, weary face, and said with homely kindness,—

"Sit ye down, sit ye down. If it's my husband you want I'm afraid you'll have to wait this long while. He's away at the theatre (we spell the word after Mrs. D'Arcy's pronunciation) and he's sure to be late."

Dora hesitated.

"I hope I have not made a mistake."

"No mistake; this is Michael D'Arcy's right enough."

"Mr. D'Arcy was very kind to me a long time ago," said Dora, nervously. "When he lived at Pennington he gave lessons at our school, and he told me if ever I came to London he would help me to get my own living."

Mrs. D'Arcy looked bewildered at the first part of the speech, but her brow cleared at the end.

"You must mean the old gentleman—not my husband—Michael's father, that came up to live with us four years last Christmas."

"Yes. That is his portrait," indicating the Oxford frame.

"Ah! he was a right good man," said Mrs. D'Arcy, feelingly; "and I'm sure it was a comfort to have him in the house; but one can't keep one's comforts always, you see, miss, and so Michael and me had to stow ours away in a beautiful oak cress, with brass nails."

"Not dead!" cried Dora, with a piteous sob.

"Oh! Mrs. D'Arcy, don't tell me my old friend is dead!" and seeing from the other's silence it was so, the girl's courage gave way, and she burst into an uncontrollable fit of crying.

"There, there!" cried the kind-hearted woman, who possessed a very motherly heart beneath her black bodice. "Don't take on so, my dear; he's better off. If ever an angel walked the earth in black cloth coat and trousers it was my father-in-law. He's gone to Heaven right enough!"

"He was the only friend I had!" sobbed Dora; "the only one!"

"And you've come up to London just to see him!"

"I came because I had no home. I was too old to stay at school, and Mr. D'Arcy had always told me if I had to earn my own living music would be the easiest way. I have some money,"—fearing her listener might think her in immediate need—"about fifty pounds, and I thought if I lived carefully that would last until I got something to do."

"Well, dry your eyes; things are not so bad as you thought. Your old friend's gone, more's the pity! but my husband has a wonderful head. He's chorus-master at the Prince's Opera, and he knows as much of music as his poor father. He's music mad, I tell him, when he's at home. He's always copying it, or humming it, or playing it. Bless you, my dear, you've come to the right place for music. We take it for our breakfast and our suppers. We're a nuisance to our neighbours. We can't keep a lodger unless he's a little deaf!"

"Then you think your husband would advise me!" asked Dora, slowly.

"Advise you, dear heart alive! Yes! Mick's a wonderful man for advice. I tell you what, you'll want for a lodging."

Miss Clifford admitted the fact.

"Well, I never have let but to a City gent, but I like your face, and you're much too young to go roaming about a strange place by yourself. Suppose you take our rooms for a week! You can sit here when you want to be private a bit, and you can come along with me when you don't. Mick and I take pretty kindly to our meals, so we shan't starve you; and as to terms we'll talk about that presently. I'm not the one to be hard on an orphan."

When she entered the stuffy parlour Dora would have said it was impossible for her to stay there a single day; but the honest kindness of Mrs. D'Arcy's manner went to her heart—at least, it was better than wandering about among strangers.

A neat little room upstairs soon received Dora and her black bag.

"And I shan't expect to see you till four, when tea'll be ready," said her hostess. "The best thing you could do would be to put yourself on that bed and have a good sleep."

And, weary alike in mind and body, Dora yielded to the advice. It was six when she awoke, and her consternation was great. She bathed her face and smoothed her hair, before she went in search of her hostess.

She followed the sounds of voices till she reached a kind of underground sitting-room; here she discovered Mrs. D'Arcy and an elderly man with shrewd, dark eyes and iron grey hair. He was much more of a gentleman than his wife was a lady, but the same simple kindness marked his manner.

"And so you came to see my father," he said, when the introduction had been made. "My wife forgot to ask your name."

Blushing crimson she gave it.

"Dora Clifford!"

"And so you want to sing, and you would not like to be in the chorus—you would not care to be a fairy prince and sing comic songs! No! I can see it in your face."

"I would rather starve," said Dora, simply. "Sir, I love music—I have nothing else in the world to love. Your father used to tell me if I studied I might make a name."

"And he was not a hopeful man," returned the son thoughtfully; "he had had too many disappointments himself to mislead others. Well, I have been trying voices all my life. I have no

genius myself, but I can tell an artist when I hear one. Do you know *Sonnambula*, Miss Clifford?"

He turned towards an old-fashioned cottage piano, and struck a few notes. It was the introduction to *Amica's* best-known song.

Another moment, and forcing back all thoughts of her miserable story, forgetting everything but the art which must henceforward console her, Dora's voice arose clear and sweet, with a power and richness no one would have expected from that slight, girlish form.

"Ah!"

It was the chorus-master's only comment. He plunged into another air from *Trovatore* this time and one requiring far more compass. Again the girl was equal to her task; even his experienced ear could detect no defect.

A little more confidence—a little more abandon might, perhaps, be desired, but the full, rich soprano voice was there—a voice many a prima donna would have envied.

Michael turned to her with a smile.

"My father was right, mademoiselle; you are an artist. It only rests with yourself to have the world of London at your feet."

(To be continued.)

## FAOETLE.

SHE: "And did her father follow you when you eloped?" He: "Yes; he's living with us yet."

A MOTTO FOR NURSEMAIDS: "Take care of the little things, and let the big ones take care of themselves."

"Will you have some of the sugar-cured ham?" asked the landlady. "What was it cured of?" asked the new boarder suspiciously.

MAUD: "I firmly believe that we should love our enemies." Jack: "In that case I declare war upon you at once."

JONES: "There goes a man that I always envy." BROWN: "Why so?" JONES: "He proposed to my wife once, and she rejected him."

MISS NEWRICH: "The Oldbloods have some plates that have been in the family for a hundred years." Mrs. Newrich: "Pooh! That just shows that they ain't never had no servant."

VISITOR: "I hear your preacher is a man of indomitable will and wonderful energy." Hostess: "Indeed he is. He has started trying to convert the choir."

BEZ: "No, he can't find a cure for bad dreams. He's willing to pay any price for a remedy, too." CEE: "Which only goes to prove, I suppose, that money doesn't make the nightmare go."

UNCLE inquired of little Bobby if he had been a good little boy. Bobby: "No, I haven't." Uncle: "Why, I hope you haven't been very bad." Bobby: "Oh, no; just comfortable."

MISTRESS: "You have a very small foot, Lucette." Her Maid: "Why does madam say so?" Mistress: "Because I always find paper stuffed into the toes of my shoes."

MR. SLIMPURSE (hankering for a suit of clothes on tick): "I—aw—presume you are acquainted with my friend, Mr. Nocsah. He has a running account here, I believe?" Tallor: "Yes. We do the running."

"Why, I should think that would be plain even to you— By the way, Cadgby, do you object to my using hyperbole?" "Eh, certainly not." "Well, then, I'll say plain to even your Intelligence."

"I ONCE knew a fellow who smoked fifty cigarettes a day without any particular harm resulting." "Is it possible?" "Yes; and the only noticeable effect was the death of the smoker."

"Did you ever laugh until you cried, Tommy?" "Yes, only this morning." "What at?" "Well, pa stepped on a tack and I laughed; then pa caught me laughing and I cried."

ARTIST: "Now, give me your candid opinion of this picture!" Critic: "It is utterly worthless." Artist: "Yes, I know your opinion is worthless, but I am curious to hear it, nevertheless."

LITTLE HELEN: "Boo-hoo! I don't want to take that nasty, bitter stuff." Her Mamma: "But how do you know it's nasty and bitter? You haven't tasted it." Little Helen: "You said it would be good for me."

"HORACE," she said childishly, "why don't you tell me you love me!" Seizing a scrap of paper, the young man wrote on it: "How can I, darling, unless you remove the pressure from my throat?"

"How did these two delightful young people happen to drift apart?" "Most natural thing in the world. He was after a heart and she after a bank account. Time developed the fact that neither of them had what the other wanted."

MISTRESS: "And remember, Bridget, there are two things I must insist upon—truthfulness and obedience." Bridget: "Yis, mum; and when you tell me to tell the ladies you're out when you're in, which shall it be, mum?"

THE MAID: "Do you believe the microbes said to be in kisses ever develop into anything dangerous?" The Bachelor: "I'm afraid they do. At least I've been told that marriage is often a result."

"WHENEVER my wife shows a disposition to nag me," he said, in explaining his system; "I simply put on my coat and go to the hotel for the night." "Your hotel bills must be something enormous," returned the intimate friend of the family.

AMATEUR SOPRANO: "It's just too mean for anything! That dog of yours howls every time I sing." Neighbour: "I'm very sorry, mum." "Why don't you stop him?" "You see, mum, we didn't know it was that way." "What way?" "We thought, mum, that you was tryin' to spite us by singing every time he howled."

 <p><b>SIXTY YEARS' SUCCESS.</b> <b>WHELPTON'S PURIFYING PILLS</b> Estab. 1836.</p>	<p><b>For Indigestion, Headache, Biliousness, Constipation, Sea Sickness.</b></p>
	<p><b>INVALUABLE FOR LADIES.</b> G. Whelpton &amp; Son, 8 Crane Ct., Fleet St., London. (5003).</p>

## How to Play the Piano.

Unique Tutor by PROF. MUNRO.

This marvellous tutor (self-instructor) is comprehensive, full music also, and as simple as A B C. It enables anyone, with or without previous knowledge of music, to learn in less than one week to play the piano or organ beautifully, accompany songs in all keys, improvise, and play dance music. Most strongly recommended to all music lovers by the *Weekly Times* and other papers. Absolutely invaluable as a time-saver and pleasure-giver. You can now become immediately your own accompanist, etc. Everyone is charmed with it. Post free, 3s. 6d.

## VOICE PRODUCTION AND SINGING.

New Treatise based on the true Italian method, showing how to breathe, produce, and preserve the voice; also how to phrase and sing with ease, good taste and effect. Very highly recommended by eminent authorities. Invaluable to all Singers, Clergymen and Public Speakers. Post free, 1s.

**THE TEMPLE PUBLISHING CO.,**  
14e, Bell Yard, London, W.C.

## KEARSLEY'S 100 YEARS REPUTATION WIDOW WELCH'S FEMALE PILLS.

Awarded Certificate of Merit for the cure of Irregularities, Anemia, and all Female Complaints. They have the approval of the Medical Profession. Beware of imitations. The only genuine are in *White Paper Wrappers*. Boxes, 1s. 1/6, and 3s. 6d., of all Chemists. 3s. 6d. box contains three times the pills. Send privately on receipt of 14 or 34 stamps, by the makers, J. and G. KEARSLEY, 17, Mark Lane, London. Sold in the Colonies.

You wish the Best P certainly. Then use

# CALVERT'S CARBOLIC PREPARATIONS

THE BEST DISINFECTANTS,  
THE BEST SOAPS,  
THE BEST DENTIFRICES,  
AND  
THE BEST OINTMENT.

They have been Awarded 100 Gold and Silver Medals and Diplomas for Superior Excellence, and should be used in every Household to prevent Infectious Diseases.

Can be obtained at Chemists, Grocers, Stores, &c.

BUYERS ARE WARNED AGAINST INFERIOR IMITATIONS, WHICH ARE NUMEROUS.

Illustrated List Post Free on Application.

**F.C. CALVERT & CO. (P.O. BOX 513), Manchester.**

## SOCIETY.

THE Princess of Wales has purchased a Newfoundland puppy from Ireland. It is a daughter of the famous "Leo," who "collected" over £1,000 for the Cork Hospital.

It is a curious fact that Queen Victoria should have an equal number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren—thirty-two of each—which, together with her seven children, makes the number of her descendants seventy-one.

ONE of the Queen's favourite amusements when at Balmoral is an almost certain bi-weekly drive to Mar Lodge to visit the Duke and Duchess of Fife. Her Majesty enjoys the long, quick drive, and her four horses are changed at Braemar.

THE Queen has fixed November 17th or 18th as the date of her visit to Bristol to open the Diamond Jubilee Convalescent Home at Redland, Durdham Down. The Royal visit will thus come within the week of the Colston anniversary, which will be celebrated on Monday, November 18th.

THE Queen is particularly fond of fish, and on her table is always found a plentiful supply of whiting, salmon, turbot, &c., according to the season. For a State or big dinner, the cost of this item alone is usually about £50. The Queen has also a peculiar fondness for a special make of thin biscuits, and these are always to be found on her table. Invariably the supply of sweets consists of two kinds, one hot, the other cold. Cheese is present in abundance, and generally four or five kinds are represented, such as gorgonzola, gruyère, cheddar, parmesan, and brie. These are cut, excepting, of course, the latter, into small squares of about an inch cube.

It is not generally known that the Queen keeps a daily account of what the weather is like in her personal diary; but such is the case. Before the Queen retires to rest she copies from the special daily report forwarded to her from the Royal Gardens at Windsor, where observations are made for the purpose by an expert among Her Majesty's gardeners. At the end of the month a special summary is also made out for Her Majesty, and the weather of the corresponding period in the previous year set aside by side with it. Her Majesty's fondness for living out-of-doors no doubt accounts for her great interest in the state of the weather. The state of the weather never prevents the Queen from taking her morning drive, and when she was at Nice foreigners were very surprised to see her go for a long drive in the rain.

THE Kaiser, as now arranged, is to leave Wilhelmshafen in the *Hohenzollern* on the morning of November 20th, and reaching Port Victoria at noon, will travel direct to Windsor by special train. At the port he will be met by his two uncles, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Connaught, with the Duke of Cambridge. The visit to Windsor will be a private one, and not one of full state as in 1891. The Queen, however, will give a great banquet to her august grandson in the St. George's Hall and a theatrical performance in the Waterloo Chamber, but the selection of the play is left to her guest. There is also to be a great pheasant shooting party in Windsor Great Park, and a meet of the Royal Buckhounds. The Kaiser will leave Windsor on Saturday, November 24th, or the following Sunday for Sandringham, in order to enjoy more shooting, and is to re-embark in the *Hohenzollern* at Harwich in the middle of the week. During his stay at Windsor opportunities will be given for his meeting leading Cabinet ministers, members of the Corps Diplomatique, and other personages. It is understood his Majesty is very anxious that the Queen should visit him once, either at Potsdam or elsewhere as may be convenient, she having never done so in his reign.

THE new Dutch coinage shows a very interesting bust of the young Queen as she appears at her present age, which is nineteen. The coins are, strictly speaking, however, in commemoration of Her Majesty's coronation.

## STATISTICS.

THERE are about 1,400 places of worship in London.

ONLY one person in every four of the inhabitants of London earns more than £1 a week.

THE combined navies of Europe can muster 210 ironclads and 638 torpedo-boats.

A PARISIAN costumer estimates that the value of material consumed yearly in France for women's dress is £40,000,000, half of which being absorbed privately leaves as the value delivered to the dressmakers £20,000,000.

SIX hundred and fifty thousand pounds of tea are consumed in Britain every day, which gives 5,200 gallons a minute, night and day, throughout the year. The tea drunk in Britain in a year would make a lake two and three-fifths miles long, one mile wide, and six feet deep.

## GEMS.

THERE is no sense in running away from trouble. Neither is there in hunting it. Face it boldly when it comes is the best course of comfort.

CONSCIOUSNESS of error is to a certain extent a consciousness of understanding; and correction of error is the plainest proof of energy and mastery.

GRATITUDE, in whatever way expressed, is of itself no mean or trifling gift. The sincere word of thanks, the honest smile of pleasure, the real appreciation of a kindness bring a flow of joy into the heart of the giver which is worth many a material benefit.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**COOKER LEEKIE.**—Make some pretty good brown stock, say two and a-half quarts, then have a fowl trussed, and add it, and let it boil half an hour. Have a dozen fine leeks, cut the white part only in inch lengths, pour boiling water over them to scald them, drain and add them to the soup, also a quarter pound of prunes, washed and scalded also. Let all boil half an hour longer. Take out the fowl, season and serve. If the fowl is old it will require longer to boil.

**POTTED FISH.**—Bone the fish (after thoroughly cleaning), and cut into four or five pieces, salting each piece on both sides. Put a layer in a stone jar, sprinkle lightly with pepper-corns, add three or four whole cloves, twice as many whole allspice, and a dash of cayenne, repeating these layers until the jar is four-fifths full. Now pour over enough good cider vinegar to more than cover the fish, add two bayleaves, fit a plate or saucer on the jar, then cover closely with dough, that all the steam may be confined. Bake in a moderate oven for five hours. Do not take off the covers until the contents of the jar have cooled. Serve at tea or as a relish for luncheon.

**FRENCH PANCAKES.**—The ingredients are: Two ounces flour, two ounces castor sugar, two eggs, two ounces butter, half-pint milk, and preserve or stewed fruit to taste. Put the butter and milk in a saucepan and let it boil, then stand it on the side to keep warm. Beat the eggs, put the flour and sugar in a basin, and add the beaten egg, now mix well together, and beat with a wooden spoon till you see bubbles come. Add the milk mixture, stirring all the time; now beat until it is of a thin batter-like consistency. Now take some ordinary saucers, grease them well, and pour the mixture in, nearly filling the saucer (these pancakes rise slightly), and bake till the mixture is well set, and slightly brown on the top. When taken from the oven, turn out of the saucer, and spread with jam, and double over like a sandwich. These pancakes are better eaten hot.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

ENVELOPES were first used in their present form in 1839.

IRON horseshoes have been found dating back to the year 481.

HEARING, as a rule, is more acute with the right ear than with the left.

A PEN carrying a small electric lamp to prevent shadows when writing has been patented in Germany.

An elephant's sense of smell is so delicate that the animal can scent a human being at a distance of 1,000 yards.

HIGH heels, it is said, owe their origin to Persia, where they were introduced to raise the feet from the burning sands of that country.

THE Russian State sceptre is of solid gold, three feet long, and contains, among its ornaments, 268 diamonds, 360 rubies, and 15 emeralds.

NATURALISTS have ascertained that scorpions and certain kinds of spiders are able to make peculiar noises to warn an enemy that an attack is attended by danger.

In some of the European art-galleries the dust is removed from the paintings and statuary by means of an air-pump, a jet of air being thrown with great force against the article which needs dusting.

BLIND fish were recently drawn from the bottom of an artesian well 183ft. deep. They are colourless and square-nosed. Their heads are large, and they have legs, with four tiny fingers front, and five toes on the hind foot. Down deep in the bowels of the earth, completely shut off from all communication with the upper world, these blind animals have hunted other blind animals for uncounted cycles.

## A LAKE OF BOILING SULPHURIC ACID.

A STRIKING article in the September *Windsor* deals with the Sulphur Island, off New Zealand. Boating in this district is evidently a somewhat hazardous pastime! "In the centre of the island, nestling among the rocks, is an immense lake about fifty acres in extent, about twelve feet in depth, and fifteen feet above the level of the sea. But the most remarkable characteristic of this lake is that the water contains vast quantities of hydrochloric and sulphuric acid, hissing and bubbling at a temperature of 110° F. The dark, green-coloured water looks particularly uninviting. Dense clouds of sulphurous fumes constantly roll off this boiling cauldron, and care has to be exercised in approaching the lake to avoid the risk of suffocation. On the opposite side of the lake may be seen the tremendous blowholes, which, when in full blast, present an awe-inspiring sight. The roar of the steam as it rushes forth into the air is deafening, and often huge boulders and stones are hurled out to a height of several hundred feet by the various internal forces of Nature. A boat brought from the ship can be launched on the lake, and, if proper care be observed, the very edges of the blowholes may be explored. But the trip is by no means an enjoyable one. Only those who have inhaled the fumes of sulphuric or hydrochloric acid can form any idea of the overpowering and noxious gases given off from such an expanse. In addition, there is a feeling of uneasiness lest by any mischance the boat upsets, as instantaneous death would be the inevitable result, and, in addition, the bodies would be absolutely destroyed in a few hours by the corroding action of the acids. Thus a cool head and no little nerve is required to make the expedition. But by cramming handkerchiefs into the mouth, and violently sneezing for a few moments, the other side of the lake may be reached, where a little fresh air can be obtained from the higher ground. Some idea of the strength of this acid-saturated water may be gathered from the fact that a boat almost dropped to pieces after all the passengers had been landed, as the rivets had corroded under the influence of the acids."

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**SUFFERER.**—You should consult a dentist.

**A. B.**—No House is required in such a case.

**W. O.**—You had better write to the War Office, Pall Mall.

**TRIMULATION.**—It is a complicated matter. You had better see a solicitor.

**MATRIMONY.**—The marriage would be quite legal, if in name she always goes by.

**POKER.**—You might find out at Stationers' Hall, E.C., or at the Patent Office.

**NEMO.**—No matter where the child is born its nationality is that of its parents.

**DORCAS.**—There is no remedy you can apply yourself. Get skilled advice as soon as possible.

**UNRELIABLE.**—Yes, the law does interfere to prevent too early marriages—that is, marriages during childhood.

**O. T.**—One of the parties must reside for twenty-one days in the parish in which the marriage is to take place.

**GRASS WIDOWER.**—You cannot legally marry a second time until your wife is dead or you have obtained a divorce.

**MYSTERY.**—A child's registered name may be altered within twelve months, on payment of a fee to the registrar.

**MUSICAL.**—Apply direct to some of the music publishers who organise concerts. They are the most likely to aid you.

**WORKY AND WORK.**—You are not obliged to support him if he is unable to work, and if you have only enough for yourself.

**NAMING.**—You must consult a solicitor, and explain your case to him. He would direct you how to sue "in forma pauperis."

**TWIGGLEDUM.**—All the fruit on your tree overhanging your neighbour's garden belongs to you; he has no right to touch it.

**UNHAPPY MOTHER.**—If the goods in the house are your own, bought with your money, your son cannot interfere with you.

**H. B.**—A copy of a will can be obtained at Somerset House. The cost—a few shillings—depends upon the length of the document.

**BALD PATE.**—Wigs are now made skilfully enough to be invisible, but putting one on would just choke down your natural growth of hair altogether.

**OCULARY.**—We regret that we are unable to give you the information you desire. All we know in regard to the matter was contained in the paragraph published.

**MARCH HARE.**—The overhanging fruit belongs to the owner of the tree. When the fruit has all gone you may cut the tree back if your neighbour refuses to do so.

**L. S. D.**—The character *L* for pounds sterling is merely a capital *L* with a mark drawn across it, and represents the corresponding Latin word *librae*—pounds.

**TOMMY ATKINS.**—The British soldier has not always worn a red uniform. White was the prevailing colour under Henry VIII., and dark green or russet in the time of Elizabeth.

**MOZZIE BAW.**—Lay a piece of brown paper over the spots and iron with a moderately hot iron, changing the paper till no grease comes off on it. Then rub the spots with benzine.

**BEATRICE.**—Should your husband die without a will, you, as his widow, would be entitled to one-third of any of his property, and his children would share the rest between them.

**DICKIE.**—Hang a small bag of sulphur in the cage. This will not harm the bird, but it will keep away the vermin etc. invariably collect, unless great care is exercised, in bird cages.

**R. S.**—The fact that chain-driven bicycles are used in such vast numbers and that chainless machines are rarely met with, is surely sufficient proof that the older style is still considered better.

**DISCOURAGED.**—We fear you will have to wait until you can get some mutual friend to give you a formal introduction; it is not well for a girl to make acquaintances in the informal manner you suggest.

**FORGIVEN.**—You certainly cannot send her flowers on her birthday unless you have been presented to her before that date, and even then it would look somewhat marked after so short an acquaintance.

**BROWN EYES.**—If anything is taken out by the roots, what can possibly be left to stimulate or set up a new growth? The principle of the growth is completely destroyed, and baldness or sterility ensues.

**S. W.**—You might try with a little spirit of turpentine inside, and sprinkling with French chalk on the outside. But if you want it well done, you had better take it to an expert worker on leather goods.

**H. W.**—To restore the elasticity of the seat of a cane chair, turn it upside down, and with hot water thoroughly soak the cane-work. This will cause it to shrink, and when dry it will be quite taut again.

**M. S.**—Write to Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., for list of subjects set to candidates for outdoor officerships of Customs, and a printed form will be sent gratis giving full information.

**NURSE.**—The best thing to heal a sprain or bruise is hot water. The wounded part should be placed in water as hot as can be borne for fifteen or twenty minutes, and in all ordinary cases the pain will gradually disappear.

**FOOTLIGHTS.**—To be an actress demands a genius or special ability for acting and expression. Having this genius, your course, then, is to get a position as subordinate in some respectable theatre and gradually grow up to prominent parts.

**OLD READER.**—Birds cannot open the foot when the leg is bent; that is the reason they do not fall off their perch. If you watch a hen walking, you will notice that it closes its toes as it raises the foot, and opens them as it touches the ground.

**N. F.**—Some of our colonies now voluntarily vote sums of money towards the maintenance of the British Navy, but none is compelled to do so, nor are the taxes levied in any of the colonies for the maintenance of the Royal Family of Britain.

**AMBITION.**—It is the case that the musical profession is very much overcrowded, and except you possess special talent we think any time and money would be wasted which you might devote to training yourself for either vocal or instrumental career.

## THE OLD HOME.

In the quiet shadows of twilight  
I stand by the garden door,  
And gaze on the old, old homestead,  
So cherished and loved of yore.  
But the ivy now is twining  
Untrained o'er window and wall;  
And no more the voice of the children  
Is echoing through the hall.

Through years of pain and sorrow,  
Since first I had to part,  
The thought of the dear old homestead  
Has lingered around my heart,  
The porch embowered with roses,  
The gables drooping eaves,  
And the song of the birds at twilight,  
Amid the orchard leaves.

And the forms of those who loved me  
In the happy childhood years  
Appear at the dusky windows,  
Through vision dimmed with tears.  
I hear their voices calling  
From the shadowy far away,  
And I stretch my arm toward them  
In the gloom of the twilight gray.

But only the night winds answer,  
As I cry through the dismal air;  
And only the bat comes swooping  
From the darkness of its lair.  
Yet still the voice of my childhood  
Is calling from far away  
And the faces of those who loved me  
Smile through the shadows grey.

**R. T.**—Take four ounces good white soap and dissolve it in four pints of warm water. Put in the feathers, and keep drawing them through the hands under the water till all dirt is removed. Rinse in clean hot water, and shake dry, either in the sun or before a fire.

**KITT.**—There is no cure equal to covering up with plaster of Paris all crevices where the insects lurk, and dusting down Keating's insect powder on the floor at night in the places where they usually run; mix a little of the plaster to putty in an old cup, and use a knife as trowel.

**REGULAR READER.**—Damp the ink stain, press tartaric acid upon it, and allow to remain till all the black has been extracted from the ink; a second or third application of acid may be necessary for this; wash out any from remaining with oxalic acid, then iron up the leaf from the reverse side with a smoothing iron.

THE LONDON READER can be sent to any part of the world, post-free, Three-halpence Weekly; or Quarterly, One Shilling and Eightpence. The yearly subscription for the Monthly Part, including Christmas Part, is Eight Shillings and Eightpence, post-free.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of any Booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 461 is Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free Eightpence. Also Vol. LXXII., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

THE INDEX to Vol. LXXII. is now Ready; Price One Penny, post-free, Three-halpence.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 23, Catherine Street, Strand, W.C.

\*. We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

## EPPS'S COCOA

GRATEFUL COMFORTING

Distinguished everywhere for Delicacy of Flavour, Superior Quality, and Nutritive Properties. Specially grateful and comforting to the nervous and dyspeptic. Sold in 3-lb. and 1-lb. packets, and 1-lb. tins, labelled JAMES EPPS & CO., Ltd., Homoeopathic Chemists, London.

BREAKFAST SUPPER

## EPPS'S COCOA

## A BOOK FOR LADIES.

The knowledge contained in this book is of PRICELESS VALUE TO EVERY MARRIED LADY, and has been the means of brightening the lives of thousands. It contains a large amount of valuable information. All will profit by reading it, as the knowledge gained is priceless, and cannot but do good. Sent in sealed envelope for two stamps.

A lady writes us: "I have read your book. It is simply invaluable, and gave me the information I have sought after for years."

B. VIMULE, Dalston Lane, London, N.E.

£20

TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING.

See THE GUIDE (150 pages), M. How to open a Cigar Store, 250 to 2500. TOBACCONISTS' OUTFITTING CO., 154, Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (60 years' establishment). Manager, H. WYMAN.

## HAVE YOU EVER TRIED KEATING'S LOZENGES FOR YOUR COUGH?

DR. GABRIEL, M.D., L.R.C.P.

writes from Routh Park, Cardiff, Sept. 28th.

"I have now prescribed them for the last 8 years in my hospitals and private practice, and find them of great benefit. I certainly and most strongly recommend them."

Sold everywhere in Tins 1/4 each.



Are YOU only HALF A WOMAN?

Do you feel run down, out of sorts, debilitated, weak and languid? Your complexion sallow, no appetite, headaches prevalent, and feel that you are not half the woman you used to be? Wear an "Electropathic Belt" at once. It will quickly restore your health by driving away all nervous disorders, curing backache, headache, neuralgia, and all nerve pains. Bringing back the bloom of health to your cheek, creating pure blood, drive away all impurities from the system, and making a new woman of you. There is no doubt about this, thousands of women have written us grateful letters of their wonderful cures. You can read their original letters if you call at our office. No case of debility or nerve disorder can resist their magic, life giving influence. Send for copies of original letters and pamphlet free, and grasp this opportunity of getting perfect health.

Only address:—

The Medical Battery Co., Ltd.,

489, OXFORD STREET,  
LONDON, W.

## NOTE

You don't have to believe in them to be cured, for whether you believe in them or not—if you wear them—they must cure you. Write to-day. Advice free.

# Sunlight Soap

**+ Adds**

Comfort in the Work to Cleanliness in the Linen.

**- Deducts**

the Cares of Washing Day from the Housewife's busy life.

**X Multiplies**

by two the Life of the articles washed.

**÷ Divides**

by two the Hours of labour.

*Manufactured by*

**LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, Soapmakers to the Queen, PORT SUNLIGHT, Cheshire.**

## PEPPER'S TONIC

Promotes Appetite.  
CURES DYSPEPSIA, HYSTERIA, NERVOUS COMPLAINTS.  
SHILLING BOTTLES.

## SULPHOLINE SHILLING BOTTLES.

A SPOTLESS SKIN.  
A BEAUTIFUL COMPLEXION.  
ERUPTIONS, PIMPLES  
ENTIRELY FADE AWAY.

## LOTION



THEY WILL NOT  
ENTANGLE OR BREAK  
THE HAIR.  
Are effective and require  
no skill to use.  
12 Curlers in Box, Free  
by Post for 3 Stamps.  
Of all Hairdressers and Fancy  
Dealers. Wholesale,  
R. HOVENDEN & SONS,  
Barnes St., W., and  
City Rd., E.C., London.

## "ATLAS" LOCK-STITCH SEWING MACHINE



Equal in size and quality to  
any Machine. Works by Hand  
or Treadle. 4 years' guarantee.  
To ensure satisfaction we will  
send Machine on receipt of 5/-  
P.O. for one month's trial.  
Balance can be paid 5/- MONTHLY.  
Call or Write for Designs and Samples of Work.  
THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO.,  
1868, HIGH STREET, CAMDEN TOWN, LONDON  
63, SEVEN SISTERS RD.; 14, HIGH RD., KILBURN.  
(Please quote this Paper).

**39/-**



## DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE

**COUGHS, COLDS,  
ASTHMA, BRONCHITIS.**

**DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE** is a liquid medicine  
which assuages PAIN OF EVERY KIND, affords a calm, refreshing sleep,  
WITHOUT HEADACHE, and invigorates the nervous system when exhausted.

**DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE.**—Vice-Chancellor Sir  
W. PAGE WOOD stated publicly in Court that Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE was  
undoubtedly the INVENTOR of CHLORODYNE, that the whole story of the  
defendant Freeman was deliberately untrue, and he regretted to say it had been  
sworn to.—See *The Times*, July 18th, 1884.

**DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE** is the TRUE  
PALLIATIVE in NEURALGIA, GOUT, CANCER, TOOTHACHE,  
RHEUMATISM.

IS THE GREAT SPECIFIC FOR  
**DIARRHŒA, DYSENTERY, CHOLERA.**

GENERAL BOARD OF HEALTH, London, REPORT that it ACTS as a  
CHARM, one dose generally sufficient.

Dr. GIBBON, Army Medical Staff, Calcutta, states:—"TWO DOSES COMPLETELY  
CURED ME OF DIARRHŒA."

**DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE** rapidly cuts short  
all attacks of  
**EPILEPSY, SPASMS, COLIC,  
PALPITATION, HYSTERIA.**

**IMPORTANT CAUTION.**—The IMMENSE SALE of  
this REMEDY has given rise to many UNSCRUPULOUS IMITATIONS. Be  
careful to observe TRADE MARK. Of all Chemists. 1/11, 2/6, & 4/6. Sole  
Manufacturer—J. T. DAVENPORT, 23, Great Russell Street, London, W.O.

London: Published by the Proprietor at 26, Catherine Street, Strand, and Printed by WOODFALL & KINDER, Long Acre, W.O.

16 JAN 1900

**"No Better Food."**—Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

***"Cocoa, Sah!"***



**FRY'S** Pure **COCOA**  
Concentrated

**275 Gold Medals and Diplomas.**

**N.B.—Ask SPECIALLY FOR "FRY'S PURE CONCENTRATED."**



# F. C. REIN & SON

(GOLD MEDALLISTS),

**108, STRAND,****The Paradise for the Deaf.**

*F. C. REIN & SON, Patentees, Sole Inventors, and Makers of the NEW ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS, awarded Prize Medals in 1851, 1855, 1862, 1867, 1873, 1878, 1886, 1892, and 1894; Inventors, Makers, and Patentees of the ANTI-ACOUSTIC PROTECTOR, &c.*

**ACOUSTIC HATS & BONNETS,**

For Ladies or Gentlemen, in all styles or to order.

The greatest variety of ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS suitable for every degree of Deafness, for Church and general conversation—some to wear, some to hold, some to fit in the cavity of the ear, of flesh colour, hardly observable.

**ACOUSTIC CONVERSATIONAL TUBES,**

TO ANY AND FOR THE MOST EXTREME DEGREE OF DEAFNESS.

**EVERY KIND OF ACOUSTIC TRUMPET AND ACOUSTICAL CONTRIVANCE.**

Amongst our numerous and distinguished clientele may be mentioned H.R.H. the late DUCHESS OF KENT and several members of the Reigning Royal Families.

WRITE FOR ILLUSTRATED PRICE LIST AND FULL PARTICULARS.

**F. C. REIN & SON, 108, STRAND, nearly opposite Exeter Hall, LONDON.****SULPHOLINE**

The Cure for Skin Diseases, Eruptions, Blotches, Eczema, Acne, Disfigurements. Makes the Skin Clear, Smooth Supple, Healthy.

**LOTION****PEPPER'S**

GREAT BODILY STRENGTH!  
GREAT NERVE STRENGTH!  
GREAT MENTAL STRENGTH!  
GREAT DIGESTIVE STRENGTH!

Promotes Appetite, Cures Dyspepsia, Hysteria, Nervous Complaints, &c.

2s. 6d.  
SOLD EVERYWHERE.  
QUININE AND IRON  
**TONIC**

Bottles  
Sold  
Everywhere.

# ZEBRA GRATE POLISH.

